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Valparaiso University

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Contributors

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Above: Audrey Ushenko, American, b. 1945, *Arcadian Shepherds III*, 1987, oil on linen, 4' x 3'.

Cover: Audrey Ushenko, American, b. 1945, *Bacchus and Ariadne IV*, 1987, oil on linen, 4' x 5'.

These paintings are from Audrey Ushenko's September solo exhibit at VU. Formerly an art teacher at VU, Dr. Ushenko now teaches graduate and undergraduate painting at the University of Illinois, Champaign. RHWB

IN LUCE TUA

Comment on Contemporary Affairs by the Editor

Reflections on the Bork Nomination

The dispute over the nomination of Robert Bork to the Supreme Court gives promise of being one of those special issues that reveal with particular clarity the fault lines of American politics. The struggle over Bork's confirmation has already aroused ideological passions and intensities unusual in our politics, and there's lots more to come. The substantive and political consequences at stake are themselves of the greatest importance, and beyond them lies the realm of symbolic politics in which the issue has been caught up and which raises it to a whole new level of significance.

The controversy rages on two different planes of contention. The first involves straight political and social outcomes. Since the present Court is closely balanced on a number of controverted issues, it is feared (or hoped) that Bork will tip the scales to the conservative side on such policy matters as abortion, affirmative action, church-and-state issues, free speech, or police search powers. From this perspective, the Bork dispute boils down to an ideological confrontation, a straight-out power struggle between Left and Right that ought to be understood as such and resolved on those grounds.

But the second plane of contention, though not unrelated to the policy dispute, extends and complicates the argument and, at least for Bork's defenders, constitutes the proper grounds on which the issue should be settled. In this view, judicial philosophy becomes the central issue and Bork's doctrine of judicial restraint his primary virtue.

The doctrine of judicial restraint suggests that judges should take a stringently self-denying view of their task of judicial review. Theirs is not a policy-making function. Since, once appointed, they are removed from democratic accountability, they must never presume to substitute their standards concerning the wisdom and virtue of public policy issues for those of duly elected and responsible officers of government in the legislative and executive branches.

When engaged in review of the constitutionality of acts of Congress or the Executive, they should give the benefit of doubt of legitimacy to such actions. Laws of Congress or activities of the President may properly be invalidated only when they violate the clear meaning and intent of the relevant constitutional provisions. Judges should put restrictions on the people's democratically-expressed will only when the Constitution requires them to do so.

Thus, for example, a judge bound by judicial restraint who personally opposed the death penalty or restrictions on abortion would nonetheless let pass legislative initiatives in those areas because such initiatives, whatever their intellectual or moral worth, run contrary to no clear constitutional stipulations. Those who would expand the boundaries of reform should have primary recourse to the political process, not the courts. Judges have no role as Platonic guardians of the true, the beautiful, and the good; put differently, the people have the right to be wrong, except where their unwisdom coincides with constitutional restrictions.

Critics of judicial restraint, observing its effects on currently-disputed matters, sometimes argue that it is little more than an elaborate conservative contrivance for arriving at tory outcomes. But a moment's historical reflection suggests that such is not necessarily the case. In the late nineteenth century and again during the 1930s liberals urged just such restraint on judges who engaged in expansive and tortured readings of the Constitution in order to inhibit state and federal attempts to regulate business activities. Judicial restraint (or judicial activism) has no inherent ideological bias one way or another; everything depends on the issues under dispute. It is in itself a neutral principle.

It is true enough, of course, that judicial restraint offers only a general approach to jurisprudence and not a detailed blueprint for arriving at correct decisions in disputed cases. Like the associated doctrine of original intent, judicial restraint constitutes a guideline rather than a formula. One cannot read the Constitution the way fundamentalists read scripture, looking for absolute assurance and precise prescription. At many critical junctures, the words of the Constitution—and the intentions of its authors—are neither self-evident in meaning nor amenable to definitive explication. In places where we might yearn for detailed guidance we get only the expression of general principle. Judicial review remains an inescapably interpretive, even subjective, activity in which men and women of equal legal acumen and constitutional scholarship will legitimately arrive at conflicting conclusions.

When we add to these considerations the commonsense knowledge that fallible judges will often practice judicial restraint when it coincides with their policy preferences and find ingenious constitutional excuses for not doing so when it does not, we can understand the arguments of those who see the doctrine as an exercise in mystification and obfuscation. Judicial in-

terpretation, they insist, is inevitably a policy-making process in which the personal biases of judges will necessarily intrude, and it would be better to face that reality directly rather than indulge in self-deceiving efforts to pretend that it is not so.

Yet if judicial restraint is not by itself a sufficient judicial philosophy, it would seem to remain a necessary one. How else avoid the imposition of an imperial judiciary that feels itself unconstrained by democratic presuppositions? How else, to be more specific, avoid the jurisprudence by whimsy of a *Roe v. Wade,* which constructed a new constitutional doctrine out of sheer judicial willfullness, or the improbable constitutional construance of a Justice Brennan, who finds the death penalty a "cruel and unusual punishment" within the meaning of the Eighth Amendment even though the Constitution elsewhere makes explicit provision for capital punishment?

Those who argue that the impossibility of pure judicial objectivity makes judicial restraint untenable have no more plausible a case than those Christians who would argue that their inevitable inability to exercise pure altruism justifies abandonment to unrestrained self-indulgence. We need perhaps most of all those ideals we find it impossible fully to live up to.

What, then, of the Bork case? Those who oppose his judicial philosophy, or find him regularly inconsistent in its application, have every right to oppose him, however qualified or even exceptional they might on other grounds concede him to be, but those who would reject him simply because they find that his philosophy leads to uncongenial policy results would by implication reduce our judicial system to a raw struggle for power that will sooner rather than later destroy the nation's faith in constitutional democracy. It is distressing to find so much of the early opposition to Bork consisting in disingenuous exercises in dubious faith, as in the largely sophistical attacks to which he has been subjected in the *New Yorker* and the *New York Review of Books.*

Some of Bork's detractors oppose him on the peculiar grounds that he is not a "moderate," as if only those who locate themselves in the equivocal middle display fit judicial temperament or as though there were some unspoken constitutional doctrine that the Court must at all times maintain perfect ideological balance. (Where were such critics during the days of the Warren Court?) To argue in this way is in effect to nullify any President's right to nominate candidates who fit his judicial preferences.

There is, finally, a political pitfall of which Judge Bork's opponents in the Democratic party ought to be more aware than many of them appear to be (and we offer this, however unlikely it may seem, in a nonpartisan spirit). For some time now, the Democratic party has labored under the disabling suspicion that it is excessively responsive to extremist or marginal elements in national politics. It will continue to be difficult for Democrats to elect a President if they are perceived as a party captive to the demands of feminists, racial militants, gays, and ideological purists.

Much of the opposition to Bork has the mood of McGovernism revisited. (See, for example, Senator Kennedy's semi-hysterical outburst on the day the nomination was announced.) It might very well lead to the same results. The more the struggle over the nomination becomes, as indicated at the outset, a study in symbolic politics, the more likely are the Democrats to come to grief over it.

Dorothy Czamanske, 1905-1987

The loss of Dorothy Czamanske last spring of heart failure is one that all of us associated with *The Cresset* feel deeply. We have lost a good friend and a valued colleague. We join with her family in mourning her departure.

She was a pious Christian and a demon copy editor. Those ascriptions may seem more alien to each other than they actually are. Her Lutheran Christian faith anchored itself in a scriptural affirmation from which she never wavered. As eagle-eyed copy editor, she held with fundamentalist conviction to her second scripture: Kate Turabian's *Chicago Manual of Style.* She clung to the latter, as to the former, as a rock of certitude in a relativistic world.

Her husband Palmer was for many years a professor in Valparaiso University's Department of English, and she held as he did to a firmly prescriptive approach to the understanding of English grammar. After Palmer died, she served under three different *Cresset* employers—Kenneth Korby, Richard Lee, and the present editor—as guardian of the grammatical proprieties. She was never a latitudinarian. When her putative superiors erred in that direction. she accepted their derelictions with resigned good grace, but also with an unmistakable air of gentle reproval. Her mastery of the rudiments and rules of style made her for years the editor and typist of choice for members of the university faculty preparing their dissertations for final approval.

Dorothy Czamanske loved the English language and served it vigilantly and faithfully. So also with her more important loves: family, church, university, community. She gave us all tough love and left us all the better for it. We will miss her.

Richard John Neuhaus

ABORTION AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE

A Response to James V. Bachman

(Editor's note: Last March, The Cresset *published James V. Bachman's "Of Pluralism, Truth, and Abortion: A Constructive Role for Skepticism in Public Discourse." In that essay, Pastor Bachman took issue with certain arguments put forward by Pastor Neuhaus. Herewith Pastor Neuhaus' rejoinder.)*

I am grateful for Pastor Bachman's analysis of the ongoing abortion debate and of my efforts to contribute to that debate. I agree entirely with his statement that "What is wanted is a way to return careful, public reasoning to the public sphere, even and precisely where disagreement persists." And it appears we do not substantively disagree on what public policy should be with respect to abortion. He gives that question parenthetical mention in one sentence (literally within parentheses) but it is a sentence I can readily affirm: "In a debate about relative risks I would initially suspect that, given our ignorance, it is preferable to risk prohibition of abortions of convenience than to risk free choice."

But the gravamen of Bachman's extensive essay is not what abortion policy should be but how we should conduct the debate about what abortion policy should be. Before turning to the heart of his argument, however, at least two errors of fact should be noted. They are errors of fact that may indeed, upon closer examination, touch upon the heart of his argument.

The first error is Bachman's repeated assertion that *Roe v. Wade* permits "first trimester abortions." *Roe v. Wade* removes legal protection from the unborn up until the moment of birth. No reason for abortion can be required before "viability." In the final months before birth, a threat to the woman's health may be a prerequisite for obtaining an abortion, but a threat to health is defined very broadly indeed. So, while there are relatively few third trimester abortions, they are certainly permitted and are obtained when they are wanted and doctors are willing to do them. (Individual justices and the Court have subsequently acknowledged the arbitrariness and disutility of the "trimester" as a concept.)

Pastor Bachman repeatedly asserts that *Roe v. Wade* permits "first trimester abortions." In fact, *Roe* removes legal protection from the unborn up until the moment of birth.

This question of fact is important because it bears strongly upon what Bachman calls the "risks" involved in policy options. Today the theory and practice justified by *Roe v. Wade* are, quite logically and routinely, invoked to justify infanticide and euthanasia. As is now very widely recognized, there is nothing in the reasoning of *Roe v. Wade* that limits the permissions it grants to the first trimester or, for that matter, to the unborn.

The second error also has to do with *Roe v. Wade* and relates to both a reading of historical circumstance and of the nature of public moral discourse. Bachman repeatedly asserts that the debate over abortion policy had reached a political deadlock and moral impasse, and that this was the unpromising situation to which the Court had to address itself. I respectfully suggest that this depiction is contrary to fact.

As an active participant in the "abortion liberalization" debate of the 1960s that was underway in New

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York and other states, I can assure Pr. Bachman that democratic political discourse regarding abortion was vibrant and tractable, if not always terribly elevated. Far from having run its course, the debate had hardly gotten underway before the Court peremptorily removed it from the "public reasoning in the public square" that Bachman and I both favor.

It is a matter of record that the pro-liberalization forces were stunned—even if delightedly stunned—by the sweeping nature of the Court's 1973 decision. As the great constitutional scholar John T. Noonan has observed, the Court did not liberalize abortion law, it abolished abortion law—a step unprecedented in the history of western jurisprudence. It is also no secret that many who favored "liberalized abortion" at the time have had second thoughts about the "victory" handed them by the Court. They wanted abortions to be available in "extreme circumstances." They did not envision 1.5 million abortions per year and the almost 20 million unborn lives terminated since *Roe v. Wade.*

The essential point, however, is that the impasse in democratic discourse described by Bachman was not the situation addressed by the Court; it is the situation created by the Court. And the impasse now is not in democratic discourse with respect to abortion; it is an impasse—one hopes a temporary impasse—in resolving the conflict between the imperial judiciary and the democratic political process. This question has everything to do with Bachman's reading of the possibilities and limits of public reason and persuasion.

There is a second part to what I have described as Bachman's second error. Perhaps this second part is more in the nature of an attendant question. Bachman writes that the Court was correct in saying that, with respect to when life begins, "when those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to the answer."

But then Bachman acknowledges that the Court did in fact give an answer, and it was a "reductionist" answer of which he disapproves. Had he a better reading of the history of the debate (see above), Bachman might have concluded that, in the absence of a "consensus" either among the public or among specialists, it would have been the better part of wisdom for the Court not to decide the question as it did, perhaps not to decide the question at all. Not even the forces that brought the case were asking the Court to abolish abortion law.

Even more seriously, Bachman (borrowing the phrase from John Rawls) says the Court respected the "veil of ignorance" which had "descended upon contemporary public debate about abortion." With the Court, Bachman thinks evidence of such a veil of ignorance is the absence of "consensus" among relevant experts. On many questions of consequence, however, experts are "unable to arrive at any consensus." Are all such questions therefore to be removed from public discourse and decision? And where would that leave the theory and practice of a system of representative democracy such as we claim to have? Bachman says the argument he is making about the abortion debate applies more generally to other debates over public policy. If he really does agree with the hapless piece of reasoning that he cites from *Roe v. Wade,* it is to be feared that his complaint is with democratic polity itself.

So far I have suggested that Bachman's admirable intention is marred by two errors, the second of which raises the several questions mentioned. The constructive part of Bachman's effort is in the proposal that there are four distinct moral modes, so to speak, in engaging public policy debate, and the abortion debate in particular. There is the moral *skeptic* (which is how he identifies himself), there is the moral *absolutist* (apparently proponents of natural law and universal reason belong here), there is the moral *relativist* (he says the present writer belongs here, when he is not being an absolutist), and then the moral *reductionist*

Possum

On a flat, white rock at mid-day we found her,
an unmoving ridge parting ceaseless waters.
My cousin and I stood knee-deep,
child footed on uneven stones,
noon flared all around us,
this unexpected island taking us separately.
We lacked language strong enough
to bury the possum.
We left her there, afraid to touch,
thinking death itself contagious.
When Steve died
I blinked at the blueness
of his burial suit,
saw the straight spine of his mother
who chose three hymns
for us to sing while we wept,
heavy with language.

Margot Cullen

(who, properly in my judgment, gets short shrift).

The way that Bachman sets up his four categories is intriguing, even if so confusing as to raise the question as to whether they are fundamentally confused. There is also a piquant touch in that Bachmn wickedly mixes up the conventional categories for thinking about moral actors in the public arena. For instance, the Jerry Falwell types, who are ever railing against relativism, end up as relativists all in Bachman's scheme of things.

But we should step back a moment and get a firmer fix on Bachman's four moral modes. The "skeptic" thinks there is a true answer to the question, but also thinks we probably don't have that true answer. (The question in question would seem to be the question about the beginning of human life, although this becomes ambiguous as the essay proceeds.) The "absolutist" says there is a true answer and all human beings are capable of giving it. The "relativist" says there are several truths in play, and works to make sure that his truth prevails. The "reductionist" claims that all talk about moral truth is no more than a smokescreen for something else, usually self-interest.

So there are Pr. Bachman's four types. The skeptic is the good guy, the absolutist may be well intended but is stubbornly wrongheaded, the relativist may be sincere but tends to be slippery and manipulative. As for the reductionist, enough said.

"An absolutist would argue that there is one true account about whether abortion in the first trimester is right or not and that this truth can be publicly determined and shared," Bachman writes. What is meant by "right or not" is not explained. Presumably, it is not "right" if it is the taking of an innocent human life. As an exmple of absolutism, Bachman cites my citation of James Burtchaell of Notre Dame. Burtchaell argues that Christian "wisdom" with respect to abortion is publicly accessible. That is, properly argued, it will be convincing to reasonable people who are not Christians. In this respect, Burtchaell embraces a natural law position that is deeply compatible with a Lutheran understanding of natural reason, civic righteousness, or orders of preservation.

It does seem a bit mischievous of Bachman to dub this the "absolutist" position, considering the pejorative connotation of "absolutism" in our culture. The position represented by Burtchaell is in fact the single most venerable tradition of moral reasoning in western civilization, threading its way from Aristotle through Paul, Augustine, Maimonides, Thomas, Luther, Calvin, and up to a good many religious and secular thinkers today who persist in believing that moral discourse is a human possibility.

In any event, while grudgingly admiring the "absolutist," Bachman thinks his is a lost cause and he should therefore adopt the "skeptic" mode in public discourse. Bachman asks in italics, *"What public stance should a rational person take when he recognizes that his private convictions cannot command rational agreement in public discourse?"* Bachman's answer is that he should take a "skeptic" stance.

But Bachman's question is filled with difficulties. The whole point of the argument advanced by people such as Burtchaell is that theirs is not a "private" conviction. In addition: What constitutes "rational agreement in public discourse"? Unanimous agreement? Majority agreement? Consensus? Are we talking about agreement in public opinion or among significant participants in the discourse? And how would the proponent of reasonable public moral discourse determine that his argument "cannot" command agreement?

The participant whom Bachman describes as the "absolutist" might better be called a moral philosopher. In the abortion debate he attempts to make the public case for what he believes to be the truth (not simply "his truth").

With respect to the debate over abortion policy, one might suggest that the measure of agreement required is a politically effective convergence of moral judgments and interests strong enough to secure an accommodation that, while entirely satisfactory to few, will be compatible with the values of a democratic and pluralistic society. Contra Bachman's "cannot," there is every reason to believe such an agreement could be achieved, absent the Court's preemption of democratic deliberation. There is also every reason to believe that those who make the kind of argument which Bachman describes as "absolutist" can contribute, as they indeed have contributed, to achieving such agreement.

The actor whom Bachman describes as the "absolutist" might better be called a moral philosopher. In the abortion debate he attempts to make the public case for what he believes to be the truth (not simply "his truth"). In this sense he is no different from the "skeptic" Pr. Bachman, who is, after all, attempting to make the case for the truth of what we know, or do not know, about the truth. As to whether the moral philosopher can in fact convince others, the debate isn't over until it is over. (And the debate over the questions raised by abortion will not, God willing, be over in our lifetime.) In that debate the role of the

"relativist" is as troubling as Bachman says.

Here too, however, there is considerable confusion in Bachman's description of the "relativist" category. The relativist allows that there are a number of truths in contention and is only concerned that his truth prevail in public policy. He "will not waste his effort trying to reason with his opponents" but will use "all the tools of persuasion" to carry the day politically. Bachman says the relativist will, for strategic reasons, allow that conflicting positions are "falsehood free." But that seems exceedingly improbable, since anyone who is trying to persuade people of his position is not likely to allow that opposing positions are free of falsehood.

Bachman's proposal for recasting the abortion debate in terms of risk is ingenuous (not, please note, disingenuous). For two decades innumerable prolife advocates have in fact been urging their opponents to entertain the "what if" question.

In fact those whom Bachman calls "relativists" do not make that allowance at all. Bachman's relativists are more readily recognized as absolutists, in the pejorative sense of the latter term. They reject the responsibilities of public reason and persuasion (persuasion being a perfectly respectable term, despite Bachman's peculiar way of using it) because their "truth" is essentially derived from private sources. For the fundamentalist "prolifer," that truth is derived from divine revelation which is not subject to public reason. For many "prochoice" proponents, that truth is coterminous with individual convenience or fulfillment and protected by the dogma of privacy. By declining the obligation of genuinely public discourse, both of these absolutists (whom Bachman unhelpfully calls relativists) do indeed, as Bachman writes, undermine "the virtues of democratic pluralism" and threaten "a return to the tyranny of the majority."

One of the central arguments of my *The Naked Public Square,* which Bachman cites, is precisely the danger posed by this privatization of moral discourse. I contend there and elsewhere that questions of great moral moment should not be decided by the counting of noses but by the weighing of arguments. If Bachman thinks we disagree on that, he has seriously misunderstood my argument. Of course in democratic decision-making with respect to policy, it does at some point come down to counting the noses of those persuaded by the arguments. Democracy is a very messy and inelegant process, and the danger of raw majoritarianism is very real.

In the case of abortion, however, I think the alternative danger of elite hostility to democratic discourse and decision is more real and, in fact, has temporarily triumphed. (I mean by "elite" what some have termed the new knowledge class, as embodied in, for example, the judiciary, the prestige media, and dominant institutions of higher education. Survey research over the years is fairly consistent in indicating that about 20 per cent of the population would outlaw all abortions, somewhat under 20 per cent favors the policy now established by *Roe v. Wade,* and the rest believe the unborn should be legally protected, with abortion allowed in relatively rare "extreme cases.")

With Bachman, I insist that arguments for public policy should be genuinely public arguments. But arguments do from time to time issue in policy decisions which, if they are to be democratically legitimate, must be supported by a widespread sentiment that is not to be confused with a "tyranny" of the majority. And this, of course, is true of all law, not simply law relative to abortion.

I have suggested, then, that Bachman's "absolutist" is in fact a publicly engaged moral philosopher and his "relativist" is in fact an absolutist who makes public moral discourse very difficult. I pass over his third category, that of the "reductionist," since it seems to me an essentially accurate description of one kind of actor in the current debate. However, his preferred category of the "skeptic" is, I am afraid, not very helpful either. It turns out that his skeptic is not very skeptical at all. His skeptic in fact knows a great deal about the truth.

Consider, for example, Bachman's proposal for recasting the abortion debate in terms of risks. What, he asks, are the consequences if public policy is based on the hypothesis that abortion is wrong or on the hypothesis that abortion is not wrong? If abortion is not wrong but is prohibited, there is a serious infringement of freedom and attendant individual suffering. If abortion is wrong but permitted, millions of innocent human beings are slaughtered. As indicated by his parenthetical remark mentioned earlier, the unskeptical Pr. Bachman knows perfectly well that it is wrong to slaughter innocent human beings.

Bachman's proposal for recasting the abortion debate in terms of risk is also ingenuous (not, please note, disingenuous). For two decades innumerable prolife advocates have been urging their opponents to entertain the "what if" question. For the sake of argument, what might be called a postulate of ignorance is routinely stipulated with respect to whether the unborn are human beings with a claim upon societal pro-

tection. The prochoice advocates just as routinely refuse to take the bait. Knowing full well that the calculus of consequences is devastating to their position, they, as Bachman notes at one point, promptly and understandably change the subject. The unskeptical Pr. Bachman knows that this is an evasion of truth and consequences.

I also have no doubt that he knows that the abortion debate is not only about the moral status of the unborn but drives to the heart of what we mean by political and moral community. The question posed is: Who belongs to the community for which we accept common responsibility and provide legal protection? The inevitable next question is: By what criteria do we exclude one class of what is undeniably human life, in this case the unborn, without by the same criteria excluding others whom we do not intend to exclude?

Some people, accepting Bachman's invitation to calculate the comparative risks, will think it morally intolerable that it may be that in the United States of America approximately four thousand babies are killed each day.

Pr. Bachman does himself a disservice. By insisting upon the truths at stake in the abortion debate, he discloses that he is no skeptic at all. What he unfortunately calls skepticism, it seems to me, is a measure of modesty about what we can claim to know for sure and a devotion to civil discourse in the public square. As attractive as they may initially appear to be, three of Bachman's four categories do not stand up under closer examination. His "absolutist" is a publicly engaged moral philosopher, his "relativist" is an absolutist who is indifferent to the protocols of public discourse, and his "skeptic" is an intelligently modest practitioner of civic virtue. However, were it simply a matter of addressing conceptual confusions or of correcting Pr. Bachman's misunderstanding of my position, his essay would not warrant this extended response. But the essay may have the unfortunate consequence of throwing cold water on vigorous engagement in the abortion debate.

Bachman's conclusion is that people "should join the skeptic in arguing that there is genuine truth and in fiercely opposing those who seek to crusade in its name." Bachman is very unskeptical in knowing that there is genuine truth and in knowing the truth about what people should do about it. Also, the call to "fiercely" oppose those who would crusade sounds very much like a call to crusade. But if by "crusade" he means impassioned warfare unchecked by reason and civility, then by all means let us not have a crusade. On the other hand, as Bachman seems not to appreciate, democracy is frequently a raucous project.

Some people, accepting Bachman's invitation to calculate the comparative risks, will think it morally intolable that it may be that in the United States of America approximately four thousand babies are killed each day. Others, on the basis of reasoning that is genuinely public in nature, have concluded that there is no "may be" about it. In either case, these people are likely to get a good deal more worked up about the situation than Pr. Bachman appears to be. Many of them may determine to try and do something about it. Pr. Bachman might call it a crusade. But it is simply the way that people in a democratic society attempt to, in his words, "return careful, public reasoning to the public sphere, even and precisely where disagreement persists."

Iberia

At the parking lot flea market, I bought
a black-velvet banner like the one my aunt
hung over her fireplace when I was a kid
who believed that all things Spanish
meant Spain. She would turn on the lamp
which spun to look like flames, then light
pine incense, safer than sparks and ashes
she would always say, and dream about
her grandmother's woodburning stove.
The matador twirled the cape, daring
the bull's heaving shoulders which shrugged off
the death he could smell in paint chips.
The tapestry became my travel poster, dispenser
of Mediterranean truths, as I planned
my escape. After high school, at a World's Fair
fiesta in Coney Island, I ate chicken tacos
for the first time, gawked green-eyed
at the jet braids of Chicanas who trilled
their r's like castanets, thinking I could
still practice Castilian, lisping a seabreeze
in a Valencia orange grove.

Martha M. Vertreace

Renu Juneja

GROUNDS WE STAND ON

Varieties of Exile & the West Indian Experience

There is a story about an Arab (or an Indian or an African) that reappears with a changing cast over different parts of the world. I originally heard it in India; more recently, I heard it again in Trinidad; and it may be significant that I have never heard it in the West. An Arab and, shall we say, an Indian are travelling together through Arabia. They are moving away from a town when the Indian is surprised to see his companion repeatedly stop and look over his shoulder towards the town they have just left behind. Finally, after the tenth such incident, the Indian asks the Arab: "Nasser, what are you doing? What are you looking for?" And Nasser, unperturbed, responds: "I'm waiting for my soul to catch up with me."

The story is sufficiently enigmatic to have many meanings. Essentially about self-division, it refers to a kind of sensation familiar enough for those who are not *at home* for whatever reason—a discomforting sense of disjunction between the space inhabited by the body and by the soul. We are not fully present to the present place or time because part of us is still somewhere else.

Such feelings are characteristic of experiences of homelessness and exile, and common enough in human history whenever people have left home struck by wanderlusts or driven from a life no longer acceptable. In a primary myth of Western civilization, Adam and Eve find themselves dispossessed of that magically nurturing environment we term home; they must wander, as must their descendents, in a state of perpetual exile. The condition, indeed, has been regarded as so universal that philosophers like Sartre and Camus have constructed a paradigm of human existence through metaphors of exile.

Of the dangers of asserting cross-cultural universality we are now fully aware through the recent formulations of cultural anthropology. No aspect of human existence appears in timeless isolation. No event is free of wider political realities and no behavior innocent of the larger cultural context. So, too, the cross-cultural experience of exile should not obscure that these experiences express very different social and moral realities. The causes, the effects, the preceding and resultant attitudes to exile transform the reality of this apparently universal experience.

Let us take some specific instances of exile. For the Jews during their Babylonian exile, the pain and grief of dispossession is made bearable by two factors: what has happened is not altogether inexplicable and need not, will not, be final. If Yahweh's anger has caused their being driven away from home, then it is also an anger which has been merited. God's will has caused the exile and in God also lies the hope. God will—when human suffering is sufficient, repentance sincere, divine anger diminished—lead the people back home. Such is the understanding promoted by the prophetic writings of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah, and such the belief which sustained Jews through centuries of diaspora—a view of history that now promotes what some perceive as a somewhat excessive devotion to the notion of Israel as a divinely-sanctioned homeland. One of the supreme ironies of our century must be that the exiled, wandering Jew, almost paradigmatically homeless, should now render the Palestinian Arabs homeless.

With some other religious exiles, however, this search for home has been a very different experience with different consequences. Most notably, the many sects of Protestant refugees fleeing Europe for the New World were not only leaving home, they were also going home. Perhaps for this too there is a parallel within the paradigmatic Jewish experience. During Exodus, when the Jews were both driven from and

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chose to leave Egypt, for many this separation must have felt like leaving an accustomed if confining home. But even as the Jews were driven from Egypt they were drawn to Canaan. So, too, were the Puritans both driven from England and drawn to the Americas by the promise of religious freedom, a journey that the Puritan poet Andrew Marvell envisions as almost a return to the lost Edenic home:

Where the remote Bermudas ride
In the ocean's bosom unespied,
From a small boat, that row'd along,
The listening winds received this song.

What should we do but sing his praise
That led us through the watery maze,
Unto an isle so long unknown,
And yet far kinder than our own? . . .
He gave us this eternal spring,
Which here enamels everything
And sends the fowls to us in care . . .
He makes the figs our mouths to eat
And throws the melons at our feet . . .
"Bermudas"[1]

The New World is now too well populated and too well sustained by a manifest cultural system to appear the Eden we can shape to our dream. Unlike the seventeenth-century immigrants, modern immigrants to America must seek to adapt to, fit into, an existing society. But like the Puritans, the twentieth-century immigrants have *chosen* to leave their home, although now the motivations are overwhelmingly economic. In such an exile there is little discontent. These people now are where they want to be.

Their worlds of memory and dream may remain haunted by a landscape left behind, but their conscious and public pronouncements are usually filled with almost cloying gratitude for being here—a profession of gratitude that the society they have joined expects and even demands. Many, of course, remain, mentally if not physically, holders of dual passports. Some are even vaguely self-divided. Nonetheless, all make a willing and determined effort to assimilate by acquiring the language, mannerisms, modes of behavior, attitudes, and values of their new home.

In contrast, one of the most shattering varieties of homelessness must be the one induced by colonialism, a condition which is not only a geographical fact but also a state of mind. Without adequate recorded testimony, estimates of the effects of the Roman Empire or Greek slavery must remain at the level of inference and extrapolation. With the more recent instances of European colonialism the consequences are easier to analyze because, in some measure, they are still with us.

First, there was the spiritual dispossession of those who continued to live in the territory they regarded as home. For the people of Asia and Africa, for instance, this possession by a race and civilization so alien from their own induced a kind of schizophrenia among those brought into contact with the imperial race. At the most extreme ends of the spectrum, as for instance in island societies where the smallness of the territory made reservation culture impossible, we note the tragic consequences of this spiritual dispossession—the near extinction of the Arawaks in the West Indies and the total extinction of the Tasmanians in the Pacific.

One of the most shattering varieties of homelessness must be the one induced by colonialism, a condition which is not only a geographical fact but also a state of mind.

In his recent book, *Victorian Anthropology,* George Stocking, Jr. describes the history of the Tasmanians. The final phase of the colonizer's dealings with the Tasmanians (after the killing and the raping) was an effort to civilize them through the force of the Protestant ethic. The reports of the first Christian missionary claimed that the work of Christianizing and civilizing was succeeding. "Instead of 'wandering about the settlement with listless and careless indifference,' the Tasmanians were now wholly employed in useful labor, harmless amusements, religious exercises, and attendance at school . . . those who could afford them now ate with knives and forks." As Stocking writes, there was "one 'serious drawback to the success of the establishment.' Though 'every advantage of civilized life' had been afforded them, the Tasmanians persisted in dropping off like flies."[2] Within a single generation they were extinct.

In larger territories, the effects were, perhaps, not so extreme. Life in the remote villages of India or Africa may have continued virtually unaltered, except for certain economic and political consequences often only dimly comprehended. The urban, middle-class elite, however, were forced to acquire an alien language and through it the values of the culture of which the language was a product. The process of disorientation was, as we have seen with the Tasmanians, not merely an unplanned by-product of interaction. The Empires

[1]Andrew Marvell, *Complete Poetry* (New York: Random House, 1968).

[2]George Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987).

also had a manifest agenda of forcing the colonized out of their cultural perceptions of reality into their master's definitions of reality.

And they largely succeeded. The differences with the Jewish exile are instructive. Even in their ghetto existence, the Jews never lost their identify as Jews, or their sense of self-worth supported by their firm belief in themselves as God's chosen people. Perhaps since the efforts at conversion came from a people not radically different in cultural values and schemes of reality, the Jews were more successful in withstanding such pressures. In contrast, when the British left India and Africa, they also left behind a whole class of "brown Sahibs" (as they are called in India) and Afro-Saxons, a class which also inherited the power of the rulers.

Movements to win independence, by inculcating national pride, did ameliorate this spiritual dispossession among the educated, but the sense of inferiority internalized during colonial rule cannot be easily removed. Even when the infection is not so extreme, these are people who have been acculturated into accepting Western notions of progress and Western models of development. The masters may have left, but their institutions survive to affect political, civil, and even the inner life of the former colonies.

For the victims of slavery and indentured labor, the exile was both physical and spiritual. Since the slaves were captured from different tribes and language groups along the West African coast, they found it very difficult to retain a sense of identity gathered through group memory of history and tradition. The African slave, unlike the Jew, was deprived both of the past and the future. In also being deprived of language, the slave was subjected to that total exile where the spirit is as homeless as the body. Imprisoned in an alien cultural system, the slaves lacked the binding force of mythology that lives through language and group memory and that, as Yeats says, marries us to rock and hill, making that particular ground our home.

Given the extremity of deprivation, it may be pointless to distinguish between better and worse kinds of slavery. But if such distinctions were to be made, one could argue that the West Indian experience of slavery was worse than the North American for several reasons.

The white plantocracy of the islands continued for generations to view their stay in the islands as a temporary exile. The sugar plantations for which the slaves were imported remained merely a source of income which made gentlemanly living possible, once profits were gathered, back home in England. This New World, then, was never the Edenic haven of freedom for any group within its society, never a home away from home from the fetters of Egypt or Babylon. Within the islands, the Edenic metaphor only merits an ironic treatment, as, for instance, in Derek Walcott's poem "New World."[3]

So when Adam was exiled
to our New Eden, in the ark's gut,
the coined snake coiled there for good
fellowship also; that was willed.

Adam had an idea.
He and the snake would share
the loss of Eden for profit
So both made the New World. And it looked good.

Even when for most plantation owners absenteeism was no longer possible, when for most in reality the islands were home and England merely a temporary sojourn, the tradition of what has been called

[3]All citations from Walcott's poems are from *Collected Poems 1948-1984* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986).

in the wet autumn

the lake fogs over in the wet autumn
and the blue boats bump against the dock
lost in the fine rain that spills
out of the grey clouds

in the cafe the counter man wipes
the cups and tells the couple
from Dubuque about the crowd
that used to meet here
in the 40's

a light comes on in the house
on the hill
she parts the heavy curtains
and watches the boats bump
against the dock
and thinks of lighting a cigaret

the rain drenches the tall eucalyptus trees
beside the cafe across the water
and the blue boats fade
in the gloom
and go out

J. T. Ledbetter

psychological absenteeism continued. Those who could afford it sent their children to England for education. In 1774, Edward Long, in his *History of Jamaica,* lamented that those who return "regret their exile from the gay delights of London," and have "a riveted prejudice against colony life." "For the White Creoles," writes Kenneth Ramchand *(The West Indian Novel and Its Background),* "England was home, the West Indies was never the loved place."[4] The situation is not very different even after independence. With the recent overthrow of the party in power since independence, the former President of Trinidad and Tobago has retired to England, where, presumably, he feels more at home.

For the Black Rastafarians, the multi-racial Jamaica, where the economic and political power still resides with the colored elite, is Babylon, the place of unhappy exile. Ethiopia is the promised land.

The gravest consequence of such attitudes was what Ramchand has termed "cultural absenteeism." In refusing to regard the islands as home, the White Creoles failed to build a society with vital, living traditions and cultural forms. At best, what was available was the worst kind of cultural conservatism—the lifeless conservation of the European heritage. The appropriate image would be of a child spiritlessly tapping the keys of a piano, never fully involved in or responsive to the music, neither taking it in or giving anything back.

The Caribbean slaves, then, were forced to exist in this vast vacuum. Circumstances of slavery denied the slaves much access to their own past, their history, their culture which could sustain them in exile, and through which they could build themselves a home away from home. Since the white rulers practiced a deliberate policy of breaking up family units, the slaves were even denied the elemental bonding between husband, wife, parents, children, siblings which could sustain a sense of belonging. The extremity of their condition was, as we may surmise, further exacerbated by living within a culture that failed to root and grow (and which, despite its sovereign position, remained a minority culture in population size) in its self-imposed spiritual exile. When the massa was not home, the slave too remained homeless.

Let us turn, once again, to the Jewish experience in exile, to one of the most poignant descriptions of this experience in Psalm 137:

By the waters of Babylon,
there we sat down and wept,
when we remembered Zion.
On the willows there
We hung our lyres

Without any changes, this could be sung by the "dreadlocked" Rastafarians of Jamaica, a Black religious cult which began in the 1930s, taking its cue from Marcus Garvey's impassioned statement that the Negroes would now view God through their own spectacles, a black God instead of a white one. "We Negroes believe in the God of Ethiopia, the everlasting God—God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, the one God of all ages. That is the God in whom we believe, but we shall worship him through the spectacles of Ethiopia."[5]

The crowning of Ras Tafari in 1930, the great grandson of King Saheka Selassie, as the King of Ethiopia with the titles of Haile Selassie (Might of the Trinity), and the "Lion of the Tribe of Judah," provided the mythology for the Rastafarians. For the Black Rastafarians, the multi-racial Jamaica, where the economic and political power still resides with the colored elite, is Babylon, the place of unhappy exile. Ethiopia is the promised land, the Zion, with Haile Selassie as the King who would arise from Jesse's root to liberate the people. The mythology has adapted to the overthrow and death of Haile Selassie without any loss of faith in Ethiopia as a spiritual home to which the Rastas await return.

Yet whereas the Jews sang about what may be termed empirical history, the Rastafarians have manufactured a history, whose spiritual validity one cannot, of course, deny. The slaves did not come from Ethiopia, and return to Africa, even on the limited scale on which it has been attempted, seems impossible. Since the Jews have participated in a continuous history, they may go back to a home which lies in their past. Denied such history, and completely dislocated from the original society of which they are now an altered fragment, the descendents of African slaves must remain in exile.

Or more profitably, begin building a new home and a new society. The Trench Town Report, a survey of Rastafarians taken by the Jamaican government in 1967, revealed that the majority of household heads

[4]Edward Long, *History of Jamaica* (London: 1774), Vol. 2, p. 248; and Kenneth Ramchand, *The West Indian Novel and Its Background* (London: Faber, 1970), p. 35.

[5]A. J. Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions,* 2nd ed. (London: Frank Class & Co., 1967), p. 34.

interviewed wished to remain in the area.[6] This ambivalence of attitudes is predictable. These are people who are not at home in their present society, but who do not really have a home to which they can return. Like Nasser in the story, they must wait, in this case for their deprived body to catch up with their freer soul.

The Caribbean islands are manufactured societies whose artificiality has delayed the process of an imported people taking root in the portion of earth that is now their home. This unrootedness is characteristic even of those sections of the population that were allowed to retain their history and their traditions. The East Indians, for instance, came to the West Indies as indentured labor to fill the vacuum of cheap, surplus labor for sugar plantations after emancipation had freed the slaves from a hated life they now, understandably, sought to avoid. The Indians were encouraged to live in isolated enclaves, and so were able to maintain a coherent tradition, even retain the language for the first two generations. Although the dream of repatriation faded, India remained a spiritual home.

But the passage of time forces an inevitable divorce. In significant irony, the most visible and audible signs of Indian heritage in Trinidad today are cinema billboards of vulgar, commercial films from Bombay and the blaring of movie songs from loudspeakers mounted on vans advertising these movies—songs sung in a language that most East Indian Trinidadians no longer understand. The pathos of this situation is captured by Walcott in his poem "Exile."

When the God stamps his bells
and smoke writhes its blue arms for your lost India

the old men, threshing rice, rheum-eyed, pause
their loss chafed by the raw
whine of the cinema-van calling the countryside
to it dark devotions. . . . The hymn
to Mother India whore's a lie.

To dream of a home you cannot return to makes you a perpetual exile. In any case, for a substantial number of the population, those of mixed ancestry, even these dreams are not possible. As the calypsonian Mighty Dougla (*dougla* is Trinidadese for an Afro-Indian) sang wittily many years ago: "If they serious about sending people back in true/ They going to have to split me in two."

For sections of the post-colonial population for whom English, by whatever circumstances, has become the first and not the second language, the notion of home remains a perplexing one. The language *in* which they dream embodies a landscape, an environment, a set of experiences very different from the landscape, the environment, and the experiences *about* which they dream. Even the most successful manipulators of these conflicting realities are not free from confusions about home and, more importantly, those essentials of our consciousness secured by our sense of home—our sense of identity, of who we are and what we are.

West Indian writers are culturally worse off than Black writers in America, who can annex themselves to a creative tradition even if the tradition has little to do with the challenges of being black in America.

In the British West Indies, for instance, English is the only language, although some distinctions may be made between standard English, standard West-Indian English, and creole dialects. The peculiar colonial situation had thoroughly institutionalized the notion of England as home. Among the educated white and colored population, as we have seen, no indigenous tradition of literature developed. Hence the West Indian writers (much like their counterparts in the musical arts of the calypso, the reggae, and the steelband) are in the process of creating, not sustaining, a tradition.

In a sense, then, the West Indian writers are culturally far worse off than the Black writers in America who can annex themselves to a creative tradition, even if the tradition has little to do with the problems and challenges of being black in America. They can use that tradition to record their variant understanding of being American because, literally, they are at home in that tradition. Through language and education, the West-Indian writers belong to the English tradition, yet they are not at home in England—both because their home has been the islands and because they are not fully a part of the cultural system whose forms they learned by rote, a kind of book knowledge that can fail them at any time. Hence, for them, the situation seems more schizoid, subject to the kind of self-division that haunts Walcott in an early poem:

I who am poisoned with the blood of both
Where shall I turn, divided in vein?
I who have cursed
The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
Between the African and English tongue I love?
"A Far Cry from Africa"

[6]See Rex Nettleford's chapter on Rastafarians in *Mirror Mirror* (Jamaica: William Collins & Sangster, 1970).

The West-Indian writers, then, have until recently been in a spiritual if not physical exile. Most of them left the islands for England sometime in their careers, and many still reside away from the islands. (Canada and America, by virtue of a shared language, have attracted some away from England.) Partly the reasons are economic. The economic dependence of the West Indies predicates that all books must first be published abroad. One of the consequences of the colonial situation has been a lack of audience for the writers in the islands, where, because of a lack of education, cultivation, and economic resources philistine attitudes tended to prevail.

As Derek Walcott writes, "It is almost death to the spirit to try to survive as an artist under colonial rule, which hasn't really changed with our independent governments."[7] The writers are not only driven from the islands by such a situation, they are also drawn to England. Walcott, again, describes the experience:

the gulls who peck
waste from the ploughed channel
knew that you had not come home
to England; you were home.

Even her wretched weather
was poetry. Your scarred leather
held that first
indenture, to her Word . . .
"Exile"

But very quickly comes the awareness that here, too, you are a stranger, shut out from the inner life of the people: "But the train/ soon changed its poetry to the prose/ of narrowing pinched eyes you could not enter." And the writer returns in memory to the home he has left behind: "an ochre trace of flags and carat huts opens at Chapter one . . . invisibly your ink nourishes/ leaf after leaf the furrowed villages" ("Exile"). Walcott's testimony is not unique. "This island is my shadow," writes Sam Selvon. He will take it wherever he goes.[8]

The act of returning home in memory affirms and validates part of one's identity that cannot be ignored whatever the distance travelled from that original self. Our earliest cultural preconceptions remain, for most of us, the grounds of our being. We may learn to be at home wherever we are if we can learn to be at home with these vestigial parts of ourselves. The West Indians, then, in struggling to define a home are also struggling to define an identity, as much, perhaps, as they are trying to *gather* an identity from their fragmented, deprived past.

Predictably, the West Indian artists are often preoccupied with questions of identity. Vidia Naipaul's later fiction is obsessed with the inability of his characters to find an authentic self. His scathing depiction of West Indians as *The Mimic Men* (1967) is a despairing confrontation of the cultural marginality to which the Caribbean (and much of the colonial world) has been reduced. Lovelace and Selvon are more generous in allowing their characters to gather the self-assurance which arises from coming to terms with the past and the present, from being, finally, at home with oneself.

At the level of folk art, too, the calypsonians and steelbands are asserting that a vital culture can be born from deprivation. "Out of pain," sings the calypsonian David Rudder, "our culture was born." As he sings this tribute to the panmaker (the steelbandsman), he testifies as well to that hunger for home and identity that propels the West Indian artist into art: "And from that hunger came a feeling . . . that shaped the steel."

The West Indian artist's self-situating response to forces of history and the dominant culture also illustrates the potential of an individual consciousness to free itself of a given hegemony. Humans are, after all, actors in their history and society. If, as Edward Said

[7]Walcott, "Meanings," *Savacou,* no. 2 (1970), p. 45.
[8]Sam Selvon, "Three Into One Can't Go," *Wasafiri,* Caribbean focus issue, p. 11.

has convincingly argued, culture is a "possessing possession" with demonstrable powers to dominate, then a willed homelessness may even be necessary to free oneself of this "possession"—to allow our consciousness to admit the Others, those alterities, that this culture has so strenuously kept out.[9] I think now of Michael Foucault's vision of classical European culture as an institutionalized attempt to exclude what it deems insane.

Finally, let me turn to an example that Said, a Palestinian exile, offers of a Jewish exile from Nazi Europe—Erich Auerbach's writing of *Mimesis* in Istanbul. Said refers to Auerbach's apologia in the epilogue: "it is quite possible that the book owes its existence to . . . lack of a rich and specialized library. If it had been possible for me to acquaint myself with all the work that has been done on so many subjects, I might never have reached the point of writing."

Said probes beneath this drama of modesty to uncover the pain of exile, but also the victory over the dangers of exile—*not* writing would have meant, as Said comments, succumbing to the "loss of texts, traditions, and continuities that make up the very web of culture." But while this writing about the culture from which he is exiled staves off the possibility of becoming decultured, such a monumental undertaking as Auerbach's ("the representation of reality in Western Literature") is only possible because of this distance from home (away from the weight of the tradition represented in libraries.)

Said glosses his argument by referring us to Auerbach's essay, "*Philologie der Weltliteratur.*" Here Auerbach asserts the need to gain distance from one's own culture: "The most priceless and indispensable part of a philologist's heritage is still his own nation's culture and heritage. Only when he is first separated from his heritage, however, and then transcends it does it become truly effective." Auerbach cites Hugo of St. Victor to emphasize this need to separate oneself from home: "The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is a foreign land."

Exile is not a threat if, like Auerbach, we can *use* the past. When the past is within reach, then whoever we are wherever we are, we can come home to the present. Exile is an advantage when it liberates us from the stronghold of our natal culture, freeing us spiritually and intellectually. Or, to shift the metaphor, when it provides the distance which makes genuine critical inquiry possible.

[9]Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983), p. 9.

Living on Hardscrabble

Because coyotes are lean, we own them,
beggars that prowl parched fields
at midnight. At noon, if we stand
too long in one place, our bootsoles burn.
Only twice in my life such a drought,

the last one years ago, before Saigon.
Our crop that year was buzzards,
like watermelon vines black
after a frost. Now, Saigon blooms
often in my dreams, rockets,

monsoons too deep to wade, except awake.
I stare at skies too peaceful to believe.
I've told you all I saw, black words
like hawks gliding on thermals.
A man riding hardscrabble alone

carries his rifle for rattlers. Killing's
always in season, time enough for scruples
back at the barn, skinning a deer
that would have died hereafter.
Our children sleep with only me

to protect them, nothing I haven't
saved them from for years. Coyotes
fearing all evil on horseback
come out at night, feeding on fawns.
We dump all bales we can in dry pastures.

And still they starve, deer stumbling
down deep arroyos a hundred yards
from the barn. Wherever deer go,
coyotes are sure to follow,
tuck their tails and slink to the dump

where we save skinned bones for burning.
Mending the barbed-wire fence, we wonder
how many days until thunder, how many
steers we should auction, how many
coyotes fear guns if they're starving.

Walter McDonald

Heroes

James Combs

No man is a hero to his dog. My little dog Linus, asleep under the desk as I write this, is proof of that. My pursuit of academic heroism, in the form of massive tomes and mighty books, impresses him not. Accomplished con artist that he is, any celebratory occasion of academic achievement is a bore unless there's something in it for him. Often, as I bend over quaint and curious volumes of forgotten lore, he will give me his why-are-humans-so-stupid look, as if to say, "Scribble, scribble, scribble, Mr. Combs? Another book, Mr. Combs?" It is humbling to be around a being so totally unimpressed with human conceits.

Like most dogs, Linus hangs around because he knows a soft touch when he sees one, and is amused by these curious and pretentious beings who seem to need so many superfluous and ephemeral things, like heroism. I wonder what Ollie North's dog thinks of him?

The estimable Lt. Col. North revived interest in heroes in the summer of 1987. Was he a "national hero" or not? Polls and TV discussions about him seemed to indicate that the country was split, indeed polarized: for some he was a *bona fide* patriot victimized both by his superiors, who saw him as a convenient fall guy, and by members of Congress, with their dreary procedural objections to the adventures of the hero. For others, he was a liar and a lunatic, the hero of the shredding machine, the secret bank account, and *contra* killing fields, self-wrapped in his own patriotic last refuge, and protected by a Constitution and institutional system for which he had nothing but contempt.

I cannot recall a popular political figure since Senator Joe McCarthy that so divided opinion. Senator Paul Simon took the negative, saying tht "no one deserves the hero rank who admits that he lied, he cheated, he shredded evidence, and he violated the laws of our nation he swore to uphold," and drew both boos and applause. Many others took the positive, and there was an "Ollie for President" boomlet. Some could envision him as the kind of presidential hero we need, and others could see his election, should it occur, as proof of the deterioration of the Republic into Caesarism and reason to seek refuge from political madness in Canada.

Both fantasies, I suspect, reflect another great American ambivalence, on the one hand the desire for heroes and on the other the fear of heroes. Heroes throughout history have often been "event-making" people, mobilizing forces that effect great changes. But they are also dangerous, often leaving trails of fanaticism and blood and residues of skepticism about their utility. "Happy the land," despaired Bertold Brecht of the first half of the twentieth century, "that needs no heroes."

There is something apocalyptic about heroes. Those who like them and want them see them resolving history, triumphing over inertia and compromise, at last emerging victorious over villains and fools. Those who fear them may want justice done, but not at the price of the heavens falling. President North might redeem the future for a sunlit American summer or for a dark global winter of war and death.

The estimable Lt. Col. North revived interest in heroes in the summer of 1987. Was he a "national hero" or not?

Or, more likely, he would find it impossible to do either. Heroes don't remain heroes very long if they can't bring off some prodigious resolution to things—unless (and perhaps this was one of the keys to Olliemania) their heroism was somehow thwarted, betrayed, prevented by the petty and small-minded or even sinister forces from the triumph of their will. North has a career ahead of him on the right-wing lecture circuit, forever ennobled and celebrated as the superman who, if given the opportunity, could have defeated the Sandinistas, overthrown the Iranian revolutionaries, and shot down Abu Nidal (recall that General Patton, one of North's spiritual ancestors, challenged General Rommel to a single combat tank duel, Patton in a Pershing and Rommel in a Panzer, to decide the outcome of World War II). The best way to keep a heroic reputation intact is never having to prove it.

So those who say that Col. North is a figure from the realm of myth and fairy tale are quite right. The heroic tradition does indeed include a thousand faces, archetypical figures that act out paradigms of heroism in ritual universes. And no

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one is totally immune. Most of us in youth elevated athletes or movie stars to the status of gods. Perhaps we all have our own pantheons. And it is easy to see why on reflection. We are all trapped in our own existential ordinariness, in the daily round of frustration and humiliation, often defeated by recalcitrant reality.

The hero is above the mundane, defeats existence through his or her extraordinariness, is immune from doubt and compromise and failure, overcomes limits and rules through audacity and daring. The hero affirms for us some measure of human control over time and space, gives us the sense that at least for a moment in the sun, life can triumph over death, or at least death can be defied. We can all imagine ourselves in ideal universes performing heroic deeds. I myself have hit more home runs than Ruth and Aaron, hit for higher average than Williams and Boggs, fanned more batters than Feller and Ryan.

For these reasons, then, it is easy to see how Col. North could become an "alter ego" for old men like Casey and Reagan. They were bound by rules and procedure and "oversight"; Ollie could float above bureaucracies and committees, defy rules, come up with "neat" and outrageous ideas, risk death or capture in the palace of the Kingdom of Darkness. Perhaps he appealed to Reagan's private fantasies derived from his movie days of playing "Brass Bancroft of the Secret Service"; certainly he could bestir Casey's memories of derring-do in the OSS.

But the importance of North's heroic audacity became really significant when he went public, that is, when he became a mass-mediated personage, a face on T-shirts, a haircut craze, an object of adoration and veneration. However contrived (and he did have a consultant who advised him on how to look and what "themes" to develop in his appearance on TV), his self-proclamation was more "testimonial" than testimony, and appealed to more than it repulsed. Joe McCarthy had been destroyed by appearing as the bully on TV, proving that television could be a politically subversive medium; North proved that TV could be a politically superversive medium if one's performance hit the right public chords.

The hero is above the mundane, defeats existence through his or her extraordinariness, is immune from doubt, compromise, and failure.

North's television *coup d'etat* we might term *performance as propaganda,* making a heroic statement about what he, and by extension the country, should stand for and do, and the hell with the fickle and vacillating. Ollie strode boldly through the front door of the Congress and defiantly told them, and us, that heroes act and that the nit-pickers merely impede the hero from the completion of his quest. In a bad year for Marines, what with the Moscow embassy scandal and Stanley Kubrick's savage movie portrayal of Marine boot camp and Vietnam combat, North conjured up heroic memories.

He was Clint Eastwood in *Heartbreak Ridge,* John Wayne in *Sands of Iwo Jima,* Jack Webb in *The D.I.* He was clear-eyed, aggressive, and single-minded in the halls of the bleary-eyed, timid, and fuzzy-minded. He was a master of single-think and straight talk in the citadel of doublethink and double-talk. He was an heroic individual defying and even lecturing a decidedly unheroic institution, a body at worst obstructive and at best irrelevant to his unrepentant heroism.

A lot of us loved it, and embraced him as an embodiment of our collective alter egoes, what we in our heart of hearts would love to do—flaunt convention, act without doubt, soar above the ordinary. The mythic Ollie is like Peter Pan, a child-king in a fairyland of beauty and menace who lives an eternal adventure and who always defeats the Captain Hooks of the world. (Does this mean that Fawn Hall is Tinker Bell?)

Such are the momentary satisfactions of television performance. It was for many a performance to be savored, and North a figure to be treasured. But in the age of mass media, the performance principle may be good for one show and no more.

In some ways, Oliver North is similar to Charles Lindbergh. In a celebrated article, John William Ward suggested the meaning of Lindbergh's flight. The flight came, he says, "at the end of a decade marked by social and political corruption and by a sense of moral loss. . . . A philosophy of relativism had become the uneasy rationale of a nation which had formerly believed in moral absolutes. . . . Lindbergh's chief worth was his spiritual value." Lindbergh became an instant mass-mediated hero because for his time he gave the country "a glimpse of what they liked to think themselves to be at a time when they feared they had deserted their own vision of themselves."

Lindbergh was a more unwitting and reluctant hero than North, but Ward's point is that Lindbergh flew the Atlantic at precisely the right moment. Lindbergh combined something of the mythic past (the lone individual doing something heroic) and the mythic future

(doing something heroic with new technology), giving the celebrating public the sense that he represented the survival of something valuable from the past useful for progress into an uncertain future. After that momentary celebration, however, he had served his purpose, and even though a great future in politics or whatever was predicted for him, he faded into relative obscurity (save, of course, for the kidnapping and murder of his child and his involvement in the America First movement, the latter of which tarnished his heroic image).

North emerged as a hero at a moment of uncertainty somewhat similar to 1927. Both national and individual values and purpose seemed a bit unraveled, and some of the popular heroes of the age—Lee Iacocca, Ivan Boesky, Jim and Tammy Bakker, Gary Hart—in moral eclipse. The ethos of the age seemed to have deteriorated into sheer opportunism, and a convicted murderer and the head of a prostitution ring got their stories on the national bestseller lists. TV news paraded a steady stream of influence peddlers, inside traders, indicted public officials, and athletes caught with drugs. The Governor of Texas saw nothing wrong with payoffs to football players at a Methodist university.

Just before the emergence of North 62 per cent of those interviewed in an ABC-*Washington Post* poll said they thought things in the United States "have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track." Like Lindbergh, North gave us a heroic vision of what we should be at a time when we were not at all certain we ever would be.

Unlike Lindbergh, there was much public division and ambivalence about North. For some, North's attitude was part of what was terribly wrong at the present; for others, his attitude was what we needed to put things right. The Iran-contra committee itself debated the proposition that "the end justifies the means." When Congressman Lee Hamilton chided North that "his attitude didn't square with the U.S. Constitution," North didn't seem to comprehend. Those suspicious of such heroics found that chilling.

Would Ollie shred the Constitution itself? Could he not imagine any moral or political constraints on secret wars, unknown deals, and unaccountable funds? Did he condone an American state run by a shadow government, with secret ideas about imposing martial law? Was he willing to burn the American village in order to save it?

Such nagging questions took a bit of the bloom off the Ollie rose, and the Republic seems destined to survive the little shaking that North gave it. For as Linus says, quoting Emerson (like George Apley, Linus finds that Emerson always has something capital to say about such things), every hero becomes a bore at last. North's volcanic heroism will no doubt be cooled by success on the banquet and book circuit.

The Red Toyota Truck Event

Amelia'd never studied mirrors much
or even her reflection when she passed
(at six-o-nine exactly, every morning,
rain or shine) the Paradise Cafe. But
yesterday's experience changed all that.

Striding out the valley at, predictably,
five-twenty-five, then over Widow Martin's
fields towards town to, as she likes to put it,
"Clear the head while Ledville sleeps,"
she sensed routine was to be somehow broken.

Sure enough. Where Main and Union intersected,
a red Toyota truck had stalled. Or waited.
Its driver, half-hung out the window, grinned
"Good mornin' " first, then "—darlin!" with
his lips pressed so (never say I told) "suggestively"
into a kiss, she never thought, well,
should she answer, but only reddened while he
whistled off with one well-muscled arm still
hanging out, saluting.

And so he doesn't know she
missed the curb and stumbled kind of blindly north
the wrong and, therefore, unrecorded way back home
to check—the first time ever so—her
entry, bedroom, bathroom, parlor mirrors.

Lois Reiner

His zeal will be channelled into speechifying, but one suspects no future Administration will touch him, and the Pentagon dislikes such lone rangers. Running for Congress would be tantamount to joining the Iranian *mullahs* or Ortega's Politburo. More importantly, by the end of 1988 Ollie will be, as the kids say, history. He will find the people more fickle and vacillating than the Congress.

On television, the North of now, spinning his own telegenic heroism out of video cloth, zealously banters on, inviting us to suspend belief.

In any case, the North phenomenon reminds us that there are deeply rooted desires among at least a segment of the American populace for heroes. But TV heroism like we saw with North is a fleeting thing, something fanciful and even a bit childish. In some ways, it all can be viewed as a harmless exercise in political immaturity.

But I think there is a larger problem. With a few reservations, I concur with the school of thought in historical sociology that holds that the world is being emptied of authority. American Catholics ignore the traditional authority of the Papacy; the Watergaters and Irangaters defy the institutional authority of the Congress; after Hitler and Khomeni charismatic authority has been widely suspect. A mass-mediated hero like Lindbergh or North becomes a temporary substitute for our desire to believe in a human power to triumph over something.

But such figures emerge precisely because of our concurrent desire to find authority and to disobey authority, to be both good and free. The present finds us in a mighty search for authority. Allan Bloom seeks it in the classics; evangelicals seek it in the Bible; authoritarians seek it in the State; libertarians seek it in the Self. But for our century authority has been hard to sustain, largely because people define freedom as the absence of authority. North seemed oddly heroic because he combined an unshakable belief in the authority of the Presidential state with his freedom to act beyond the rule of law or even the consent of his own authority figures.

But the popular nerve that he struck in the summer of 1987 revealed how much we want to believe in heroes, and how little we actually believe in authorities. North's attitude represented something of our own: he believed in heroism, but seemed to have little respect for authority, including his superiors, whom he gladly implicated in wrongdoing. He may have done a great deal for heroism, but he didn't do much to increase popular faith in public authority.

If it is the case that authority in the world is being steadily eroded, then we may see in the future the quick rise and fall of heroic self-assertions, painless but stimulating substitutes that author their own performance but authorize nothing. This could mean a televised political world that would be turbulent and even bizarre, but not very stable. For if we are to witness a world in which instituted authority is the problem, and occasional heroism the solution, then the Norths of the future could wind up being more than harmless summertime amusements.

On TV, the North of now, spinning his own telegenic heroism out of video cloth, zealously banters on, inviting us to suspend belief. Linus snorts and goes back to sleep, unimpressed. Smart dog.

Contemporary Definitions

Gail McGrew Eifrig

As a public service, some 1987 updates to your lexicon:

civil disobedience

a refusal to obey laws which the individual feels are unjust or bad laws. For such a refusal the individual expects punishment, and is willing to endure it for the sake of pointing out the problems with the law. Remember the old story about Thoreau, in jail for not paying what he thought was an unjust tax? (Emerson: Henry, what are you doing in there? Thoreau: Waldo, what are you doing out there?) This is of course an old story.

disinformation

telling people what you know is not the truth, so that they will act on the basis of your version of the facts. This proceeding is apparently so common in government that a former student told me cheerfully that his job in Washington was "disinformation—just for the summer."

deniability

a valuable feature of any ven-

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ture, endeavor, or enterprise that the planner feels might turn out badly, enabling the person responsible for the plan to say he didn't know anything about it. "Deniability" has to be built in, or provided for, and thus it is by definition an indication of knowledge. If you don't know about something, you don't have a chance to plan for deniability. This may seem to be a new term, until you remember Eisenhower trying to work some deniability into the Gary Francis Powers case after the fact.

freedom, democracy, liberty, truth, justice, and the American way

a group of words with meanings far too difficult and complex for the ordinary American to worry about. If somebody wearing medals uses them, and says "sir," you can just accept his definition.

hero

a sandwich

cynicism

a condition of distrust about most important things (authority, politics, religion, eduction, art, medicine, etc.) which used to describe a stage through which young people passed on their way to adulthood, and now characterizes most of the people most of the time beginning as early as eight or nine years of age.

residuals

If you don't want to say "the profits from the deal," you can say "the residuals from the project" and sound just like an admiral. Or a lieutenant colonel. Or an ex-Iranian residualeer.

"I don't recall"

a magical phrase that instantly exempts the speaker from any responsibility for what is being asked about. Try this phrase when the IRS asks about your deductions for business expenses, or when your wife asks you what you did with the children you were supposed to bring home from camp, or your boss asks you what you did with the files on United Widget. (Nagging question: what was John Poindexter doing at the time of the famous November finding that was so much more important than getting a presidential authorization for an arms-hostages deal that it obliterated this business from his mind?)

For important people, not telling the truth is called "withholding information," and is different from lying. That is because they are important people.

shredder

a machine that quickly and almost automatically gets rid of guilty secrets. Much easier and quicker than a confessional. A shredder means never having to say you're sorry.

lying

For ordinary people, lying is not telling the truth when you are asked to tell the truth. For important people, not telling the truth is called "withholding information" and is different from lying. Because they are important people. I once babysat a little girl who withheld information about what she had been doing in the kitchen for so long. She withheld it for some minutes, until she felt so bad and so guilty about having eaten up what was to have been everybody's treat that she came in wailing "Kooooool Aiiid!" This confession was news to nobody, since her whole face had been covered in cherry-colored dust the whole time. But then, she was only four, and apparently didn't have the sense to know that you can go on withholding information till the cows come home, never mind what is all over your face.

shame

a mysterious term, now so archaic that no definition has been found, though during the summer of 1987, numerous people experienced symptoms that seem to indicate that, whatever this term means, it hasn't quite disappeared.

patriotism (God and . . .)

"Although he is regularly asked to do so, God does not take sides in American politics, and in America disagreement with the policies of the government is not evidence of lack of patriotism. I want to repeat that. In America, disagreement with the policies of the government is not evidence of lack of patriotism." Senator George Mitchell, D-Maine.

How to Read Criticism

as
metaphor as

left
guessing right figuring

Pegasus by abacus
reaching in-

to cookie jars to finger
what is

better tasted tongued
than fiddled with

Bradley Carpenter Davis

Signs of Theatre

John Steven Paul

There must exist no more sincere expressions of "Eureka!" than those that follow a playwright's discovery of a good theatrical idea. Given the number of times one hears people say in a sigh or a groan "this is like a play," one would think that there would be numberless ideas out there waiting to be dramatized. But the relative paucity of good plays over, say, 2,500 years attests to the scarcity of really good dramatic ideas.

Probably 60 per cent of a successful play is a good idea. The summer production of *The Signal Season of Dummy Hoy* at Chicago's Commons Theatre was about 60 per cent successful. That is to say that much of the production was poorly executed, unfocused, and dull. But the idea that playwrights Allen Meyer and Michael Nowak began with shone through the amateurish haze and recommended itself to us for reflection.

William Ellsworth Hoy actually played professional baseball in the time before the sport had become the national pastime. He was a superb hitter and fielder, a franchise player. Hoy was also deaf and mute and, in an age less sensitized to the feelings of the handicapped, was nicknamed "Dummy." (A name, by the way, of which he came to be proud and preferred to "William.")

Dummy Hoy broke in with the Oshkosh, Wisconsin baseball club of the Northwestern League. A good portion of Hoy's career was over by 1900; he had matured with the sport. He came to Oshkosh before the number of bad pitches required for a base on balls was reduced from nine to four. Pitchers had yet completely to give up the underhand pitch in favor of an overhand delivery. Batters could call for a high pitch or a low pitch.

There weren't many standardized rules from league to league but there was a good deal of unruliness among the players. Baseball had yet to become a business and most players had little more to gain than a bare living wage and the fun of playing. Though they wore uniform neckties on the field, most of these men had but little concern for civilized decorum or good sportsmanship. And, of course, their general tendency toward brutish behavior intensified when focused on a man who could only express himself with his face and hands.

This situation invites sentimental treatment and too much of *The Signal Season of Dummy Hoy* is too predictable: the virtuous young man, ennobled by his handicap, is doubted by the crusty manager and mistreated by his despicable teammates. But through talent, determination, and love for the game, the deaf-mute goes on to a successful baseball career and is, much later, honored as one of the pioneers of the game.

They say that the most important day in Dummy Hoy's signal season was the day he convinced the umpire to accompany his barks of "ball" and "strike" with hand signals. As he faced the pitcher, Dummy couldn't read the call from the ump's lips. When he turned around to ask for a repeat, the pitcher would "quick-pitch" him before he could right himself.

For a time, the other players, who were not so stupid that they didn't realize his value to the team, tried to relay the calls to Dummy from the coaching box: the right arm raised for a strike, left arm raised for a ball. But these dolts so often confused right and left and were so easily distracted that the relay system failed. So it came to pass—the precise historical details are lost—that William Hoy approached an umpire directly and requested that he use hand signals for balls and strikes. The umpire granted the request and signs became a part of baseball.

Dummy Hoy actually played professional baseball in the time before it had become the national pastime.

The power and depth of the idea of a deaf player who introduces signs to baseball is revealed when, in the crucial moment that Dummy makes his request to the umpire, several levels of meaning intersect. In that moment, 1) Dummy Hoy, who signs to communicate, requests, in effect, that the umpires speak his language; 2) baseball, which, along with the other major professional sports, entertains the rapt attention of so many Americans, adopts an approach to communication which is, 100 years later, part of the essence of organized sport; 3) Dean Patrick Cannavino, who portrays Dummy and who is himself deaf, is signing to Ken Kade, who portrays the umpire; 4) Cannavino and Kade, as actors, are

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employing gesture, a sign system which, some would say, has always been more important to theatrical communication than the spoken word; 5) every other element of the theatrical *mise-en-scene* is communicating to the audience as a sign; 6) two signing interpreters, seated on stools upstage, are signing the spoken portion of the scene to the hearing-impaired members of the audience; and 7) two cultures, the speaking culture and the signing culture, are confronting and communicating with one another.

(1) On the first level this clash of cultures makes for simple but compelling melodrama. Dummy Hoy against the baseball establishment. It's a natural. One of the team's scouts has discovered Hoy in Ohio and recognized his special ability. The scout figures that the special disability will be manageable. But the owners, managers, umpires, and players become annoyed when they realize that Hoy's handicap will require extra energy on their parts. And, he's different. Not only is he deaf, but he's intelligent, refined, modest, and kind. Troublesome and different: good reasons to be rid of him.

But Hoy wants desperately to play professional ball. Finally, he parlays his talent into a grudging respect and, in the penultimate scene of the play, he works a momentous compromise with the umpire (who is also a local judge). Now he will be able to compete on equal terms with full-facultied players. It is a civil-rights conflict with great dramatic potential. Look for the movie.

(2) Most of us view our favorite sports on television. If we are blessed with good hearing, or corrective appliances, the non-stop commentary may dull our sense of the extensive signaling by umpires, referees, managers, coaches, and the players themselves. But all one need do is attend the ball park or the stadium to become newly aware that signaling is as much a part of sport as passing, pitching, or punting.

Signs precede, accompany, and follow every action. Despite the fact that everyone can see the basketball swishing through the net, the referee raises a fist and two fingers to signal "two points." The system of football signals is arcane. A baseball third-base coach signaling to his batter could just as easily be practicing a break dance routine.

Had I not known that Cannavino was deaf, I might well have thought that he was an expert and graceful signer.

We can't help wondering about the origin of sports signals. Now we know. No doubt the explanation is part fact and part myth, but then myth has long been the starting point for drama.

(3) I know very little about Dean Patrick Cannavino except for what I have read in his brief program biography. He has been deaf since birth. He has made one other appearance as an actor in Chicago. While he was studying theatre at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in New York, he played in six major productions.

What the program did not need to say was that he was handsome, agile, and easily the most interesting actor on the stage. Since the program told me that Cannavino is deaf, I was aware that he had a special disability. While the other actors used their voices, tongues, lips, and so forth to speak, Cannavino "spoke" with his body, his face, and his fingers.

In general, there are three responses to the disabled performer. If his disability is distracting or prevents the actor from fulfilling the requirements of the role, the audience responds negatively: they patronize, compensate, or try their best to ignore the distraction. Second, the disabled actor may be good. Then most of the audience becomes unconscious of any difference in his performance. Had I not known that Cannavino was deaf, I might well have thought that he was an expert and graceful signer who had worked hard to understand the role of Dummy Hoy. (I have seen fully-sighted actors play blind characters frequently, and if they're good enough I simply forget that their sightedness is a handicap.)

Some disabled actors are able not only to transcend their physical condition, but to transform a disability into a special power. I recall the first time I saw the road company production of *Children of a Lesser God* at the Blackstone Theatre in the early Eighties. It was a generally fine production of this moving play, but what I remember most is the signing. Most of the company had trained with the National Theatre for the Deaf. Their swift and agile signing could not be spoken of merely in terms of expertise and grace, but of art.

I knew nothing of the denotation of the signs and I was sitting in the balcony of the large Blackstone Theatre, but I recall their hands as butterflies, flitting and lighting. The signing itself became a metaphor for freedom of the spirit; talking, which some of the characters fiercely resisted, seemed cloddish and mundane by comparison.

The special communicative power of another disabled actor enhanced the Goodman's recent production of *She Always Said, Pablo.* Susan Nussbaum played Gertrude Stein in this exquisite theatrical meditation created by Frank Galati on the writing of Stein, the images

of Pablo Picasso, and the music of Virgil Thompson. Nussbaum appeared Picasso's famous portrait of the seated Gertrude Stein come to life.

She remained seated at all times, and managed her considerable movement by means of a motorized wheel chair. It occured too me only after quite a while that Nussbaum was actually unable to use her legs; she is paralyzed from the waist down. The juxtaposition of serene cerebration and active intellection was a perfect combination for Stein. The paradox of immobility in motion suggested the cubist art that she championed.

(4) As Cannavino (Hoy) signed to Kade (the umpire), they displayed two modes of communication in high contrast. As Kade struggled to make Cannavino understand words, his frustrated gesticulations increased, but his hands were no more persuasive than his tongue. Cannavino, accustomed to relying entirely on gesture, communicated more coherently.

Spoken word and gesture do battle in the scene and may at times do battle within a single actor. An incompetent actor or a young actor at the beginning of a training program will sometimes manifest a disjunction between the words he is speaking and the expressive motion of his body. The mind is making two efforts: one to move the body, the other to say the words that have been written by someone else. Much of acting training is devoted to healing that psycho-physical split and helping the actor to produce the word as a natural part of a physical action.

For the signing actor, the "words" appear indeed to be physically connected to the rest of the body. There are no words to get in the way. Undoubtedly, during the time the mute actor is assimilating the text, the signing is similarly disjointed. But the effort to fit the action to the word must be more natural. For the signing actor, the word is a finger on the hand of gesture.

(5) Two twentieth-century theorist-artists, Antonin Artaud and Bertolt Brecht, not only advocated the serious, systematic use of gesture, but insisted that gestural communication was more effective than spoken language. For their models, they turned to Eastern theatre forms. For Artaud, the European theatre which relied on the word to represent ideas was not as pure as the Balinese theatre which employed gesture and sign. Brecht, an admirer of the Chinese actor and mime Mei Lan Fang, felt that all true theatrical communication was gestural, *showing* meaning instead of *telling* it.

The juxtaposition of serene cerebration and active intellection was a perfect combination for Gertrude Stein.

Brecht made brilliant use of words, but only as a part of the larger *gestus*. He and Artaud understood that the totality of theatrical communication, the macro-gesture if you will, is composed of every sensuous element on the stage—costumes, lighting, properties, scenery, make-up, movement, gesture, and the spoken word.

Semioticians would say simply "all that is on stage is a sign." In fact, a semiotic theory of theatre identifies many distinct sign systems in use during a single theatre event, and posits a complex interaction among those systems. The thought of managing the information being projected from the stage is daunting. That is, however, what a director is expected to do.

(6) There are some theatre directors who are better able to control the signal information on the stage than others. (I think, for example, of the late Alan Schneider directing a late work of Samuel Beckett to perfection.) But to insure that the entire communicative transaction between all the signs transmitting information from the stage and the spectators, each of whom is interpreting those signs according to a personal set of codes, is certainly not possible.

At best, the director must make a series of educated guesses about the audience's interpretive codes. He assumes the audience's familiarity with such signal systems as language and gesture as well as scenery, stage lighting, costume, and make-up. The director can be less sure of the spectator's cultural codes, which are derived from his entire life experience. It is on the basis of these codes that an individual interprets the signs transmitted in the course of any event, theatrical or other.

If the communication is to have any chance of being successful, the audience members must not only be able to understand the various signs of theatre, they must also be able to recognize the performance *as such*. They must understand the rules of the theatre game, including the rule of "framing." All initiated audiences frame, by attending to certain signs that they understand to be part of the performance, and *dis*attending to other signs that are not. Thus, an actor sneezing onstage will be within the frame, a sneezer in the audience will be outside.

Most of us have viewed programs or performances "signed for the hearing-impaired." If we are members of the hearing audience, we are accustomed to placing the signers outside the frame. (Television, as always, rushes to the aid of the inept by drawing a graphic frame around the signer and placing him

in a corner of the screen.)

But what about sign interpreters in a play like *The Signal Season of Dummy Hoy*? Inside or outside? Joyce L. Cole and Paul Raci sat roughly upstage center on the tiny Commons Theatre stage. They were costumed in vaguely late-nineteenth-century style. They are experts who sign not only with hands and fingers but also face and body. It was *possible* for a hearing audience member to disattend to the signers, but were they meant to be outside the frame?

The Commons Theatre sign interpreters remained stationary, making framing possible. When The National Theatre for the Deaf brought its beautiful production of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* to the VU campus last February, they deliberately made such framing impossible. There were both deaf and hearing actors in the company, as well as ones who spoke and ones who did not.

As the story of the deaf-mutes Singer and his beloved Antonapoulos unfolded, the task of interpreting was assumed by various actors on what appeared to be a random rotating basis. Sometimes actors spoke for themselves; at other times, their colleagues spoke for them, following no discernible pattern. The result was not the chaos that one might fear, but a choir of actors in a polyphonic performance of shared communication. There was no need, and certainly no desire, to disattend to anything.

(7) Finally, in that moment when Dummy Hoy describes to the umpire a system of signs for balls and strikes, two cultures meet. Each has its own language and lore, its own way of expressing sorrow or telling a joke. Of course, there are large segments of the culture that overlap one another, but there is much that is distinct.

Each conversant is proud of his language. Each is painfully aware of his limitations as a communicator. Each culture has much to give to the other, and much to tolerate about the other. The line of confrontation extends from the lighted stage into the darkened auditorium, where *we* sit next to *them*. The bridge between the two cultures is the sign.

Alien and exclusivistic at first, ultimately the sign of a good show is unifying. It was always been so, for at the beginning of a play, there are always at least two distinct cultures; at the end of a successful show, there is often only one.

After Watching the Space Shuttle Explode

Bury the film, and let
the simple air we breathe
be marble. Over and over

they reel it back as if
asking how could we save them
seventy seconds into launch.

Surely a trick, a flash
of powder, the shuttle
suddenly gone, two solid

wobbling rockets rising
out of a cloud, like magic.
We applauded, and aaahed,

believing what happened
was planned. We've all seen
rockets part in a flash,

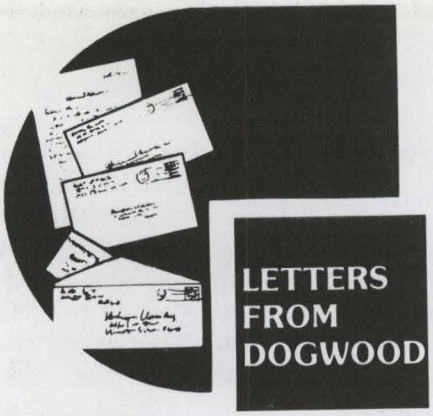
the second they should
then a spaceship emerge.
Smoke streamed to the ocean

and we moaned, over and over
begging *oh God, oh no.*
alive like us

seconds ago, then a billow
we cheered by mistake.
We shudder, fully alive

to imagine that vast
explosion, that burning,
that breaking apart of worlds.

Walter McDonald



Poems as Objects

Charles Vandersee

Out of himself like a thread the child spins pain
and makes a net to catch the unknown world.
Words gather there heavy as fish, and tears,
and tales of love and of the polar cold.
Now, says the child, I shall never be young again.
The shadow of my net has darkened the sea's gold.

Dear Editor:

The last time I wrote you about one of my favorite topics, poetry, was over a year ago. Complaining that the anthology I chose for a class the next semester had the usual faults of the genre.

Well, the anthology worked all right. We did have to supplement it with more poems by Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, and W. B. Yeats, and I made up handouts with prose passages from certain poets, on their theories and desires. The course itself last fall went very well.

It helps that in Dogwood we have a "supportive atmosphere" for poetry. The Department of English brings in poets to read (during the present semester we have Jay Parini, Robert Morgan, Amy Clampitt, and Louise Glück), while downtown an art gallery presents Sunday night readings for poetry and fiction, mostly local writers, and on Wednesdays a bookstore does the same.

Among the visiting poets last fall was one of our former graduate students in writing, Richard Katrovas. He now has two books of poems from Wesleyan University Press, which publishes one of the most respected series in the country. Since our budget allows for Scotch and pretzels, I talked with him after the reading and learned he was staying an extra day in Dogwood. He should come to my class, I told him, without thinking. Without thinking, he agreed.

We made no big plans and therefore earned ourselves the kind of success based on spontaneity. The lively, shaggy visitor, sitting at one end of the long table, opposite the teacher, restored to our minds a Keats letter considered a week earlier. He recited some good things from memory, including the Gerard Manley Hopkins lament, "Márgarét, áre you gríeving? / Over Goldengrove unleaving?" He spoke about his own discovery of poetry while a "hoodlum" in Tidewater, Virginia, and he read with force and feeling some of his own poems, in both traditional forms and open form.

Then, near the end of the semester, to the Sunday series downtown came the 1986 Pulitzer Prize poet, Henry Taylor. Henry was still an undergraduate when I arrived at the University a score of years ago, and he was accomplished already then. My ear, ever since, has retained the music of his sestina on the "summer girls" that boys meet at camp; the poem is in his first book.

He was not in town long enough to come to class, but I brought to class some of his poems. He too was a success, especially with a poem set at a large concrete park in northern Virginia familiar to several students. "Evening at Wolf Trap" expertly turns an ordinary object, a frisbee, into an arresting symbol—as Yeats did with a rag-and-bone shop. The frisbee hovers for an instant before settling down, symbolizing, among friends, a moment of happiness in which "all things ceased to age." The rag-and-bone shop is Yeats in old age falling back upon the human heart and its ordinary human desires as the source of poetry.

So thinking back on the course, I realized I wanted to repeat it this fall. But Emily Dickinson was our only non-male voice, and I craved more variety. Students did not complain (Dogood students seldom complain), but I myself wanted to hear at least one more woman spinning threads and making nets.

Not Christina Rossetti, who wrote some of the most awful hymn lyrics of the Victorian century. Nor have I acquired a taste for the bland understated poems of Elizabeth Bishop. I should get to know Muriel Rukeyser, since a former student of mine, Kate Daniels, herself a prize-winning poet, is a great enthusiast—in fact, writing a book about her. I admire a lot of things by Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton.

Emily Dickinson was the only non-male voice in the course, and I craved more variety.

But these women are all American or British. Then I remembered Judith Wright, who will give us a place and sensibility perhaps different from England and North America.

These hills my father's father stripped,
and beggars to the winter wind
they crouch like shoulders naked and whipped—
humble, abandoned, out of mind.

Charles Vandersee *has returned to Dogwood, Virginia, from Oregon and Washington.*

Of their scant creeks I drank once
and ate sour cherries from old trees
found in their gullies fruiting by chance.
Neither fruit nor water gave my mind ease.

I dream of hills bandaged in snow,
their eyelids clenched to keep out fear.
When the last leaf and bird go
let my thoughts stand like trees here.

I first saw Judith Wright on a shelf of unwanted books in the office of the *Virginia Quarterly Review* in Dogwood: books not assigned for review, not picked up for a short notice, and not taken by the university library (which had probably purchased a copy). I looked inside *The Double Tree: Selected Poems 1942-1976* (Houghton Mifflin), saw at a glance that she was good, paid my fifty cents and brought her home. This was in 1979; *VQR* remainders are now one dollar.

The poem as object is a poem of the admirable dishonesty we call art. What distinguishes it, often, from the poem of process is that it permits repeated reappraisal.

I read her through, made some marks, went around talking about her, and then went on to other things. When I pulled her out a few months ago I saw stanzas like this:

Nothing is so bare as truth—
that lean geometry of thought;
but round its poles there congregate
all foliage, flowers and fruits of earth.

She was fully as good as I had thought, and this fall she will have twenty new admirers.

Judith Wright's ancestors settled in New South Wales, in southeast Australia, in 1828. She was raised on that land, distant from any town, and, except for a year's travel in Europe after college, she has lived and worked—writing, managing property, conserving wildlife—there and in Sydney and near Brisbane. She helped run a literary magazine at the university in Brisbane, and one sees that she has read Yeats:

Once as I travelled through a quiet
evening,
I saw a pool, jet-black and mirror-still.
Beyond, the slender paperbarks stood
crowding;
each on its own white image looked its fill,
and nothing moved but thirty egrets
wading—
thirty egrets in a quiet evening.

What I particularly like about Wright—and Yeats, and Stevens and Dickinson and Plath and Keats and Henry Taylor and Richard Katrovas—is that her poems are *objects.* They are formed, polished, definite *objects.*

Does it seem odd to emphasize the word? One of the present controversies of poetry is that of object versus process. Regnant at this moment is process—the poem modest, prosy, often inconclusive, purporting to be the unreflecting and spontaneous response to a small personal situation. Its merit is its honesty, its truth—it is experience rendered directly (that is, the very process of that experience), in first person and present tense. Rather than the process reflected upon and perhaps combined with knowledge of history, of other people's experiences, and other issues entirely. As much as anyone else, William Carlos Williams is its father, and his children are many.

By contrast, the poem as object is a poem of the admirable dishonesty which we call art. What distinguishes it, often, from the poem of process is that it permits repeated reappraisal. True, the poem of process often carries an urgency of emotion that permits rehearing and effective re-experiencing; the archetype is (curiously) by another Wright, the James Wright of Martins Ferry on the Ohio River. His poem "A Blessing" will always be read with enjoyment owing to the pain of lost innocence which it evokes, in the encounter with two lovely, shy Indian ponies, and especially owing to its startling last lines:

Suddenly I realize
That if I stepped out of my body I would
break
Into blossom.

But the poem does not permit

much reappraisal, in the sense of a re-experience enlarging the reader. In selecting poems for teaching, and for my own experience with language, I choose mainly "the poem as object." I seldom teach James Wright or William Carlos Williams, though I recommend such poets to students who wish to see what in our moment is most admired.

What is admired at the moment—the moment stretching from Joseph McCarthy on down through Vietnam and Watergate to Iranian arms deals—is truth. Truth being scarce in politics, people try to place it in poems.

But truth, as Judith Wright says, is "bare." It is a curious thing; in architecture and design I do crave the "bare"—give me Mies van der Rohe, give me the simple lines and bright light woods of Scandinavian furniture. But in poems I need the complexity of earth—dirt and soil (rags and bones transfigured) and, rising out of it, Judith Wright's "foliage, flowers and fruits."

What is admired at the moment—the moment stretching from Joseph McCarthy on down to Iran arms deals—is truth.

Craving of complexity is not an obsolete adherence to the New Criticism. At Valparaiso Univerity in the 1950s we did pay careful attention to individual poems as objects, but we were not indoctrinated into irony, ambiguity, and Brooks-and-Warren. I have not had New Critical shackles to break, as far as I can tell, so that I respect the care such critics brought to the poem-as-object, rather than join in the present-moment cry of disdain. The thing is, leaving cant aside, most poems *are* objects, though of course not *only* objects.

Request to a Year

If the year is meditating a suitable gift,
I should like it to be the attitude
of my great-great-grandmother,
legendary devotee of the arts,

who, having had eight children
and little opportunity for painting
pictures,
sat one day on a high rock
beside a river in Switzerland

and from a difficult distance viewed
her second son, balanced on a small
ice-floe,
drift down the current towards a waterfall
that struck rock-bottom eighty feet below,

while her second daughter, impeded,
no doubt, by the petticoats of the day,
stretched out a last-hope alpenstock
(which luckily later caught him on his
way).

Nothing, it was evident, could be done;
and with the artist's isolating eye
my great-great-grandmother hastily
sketched the scene.
The sketch survives to prove the story by.

Year, if you have no Mother's day present
planned;
reach back and bring me the firmness of
her hand.

Liking that poem suggests why I don't actively dislike Elizabeth Bishop and James Wright, though I often find them bare. The narrative is characteristic of Bishop (see her "Large Bad Picture"), but I think she would have stopped before the splendid closure, leaving emotion to be inferred. That strong conclusion does remind me of James Wright's poem mentioned above, except that the formality of the rhyme conveys a power that comes from the act of planning that rhyme, whereas a prose exclamation has only the power of spontaneity. To put it another way, James Wright remains at the fence, momentarily transfigured (the frisbee hovering), while Judith Wright would vault across, into a passionate permanent transfigurement. She tells us what it feels like to *think*, not just what it feels like to feel.

What I say here in confidence would of course be attacked by poets and critics of different commitments and tastes from mine. And by readers with similar inclinations but with different responses to the poems cited. Controversy and taste are like flowers and foliage—we cannot always know where the roots are.

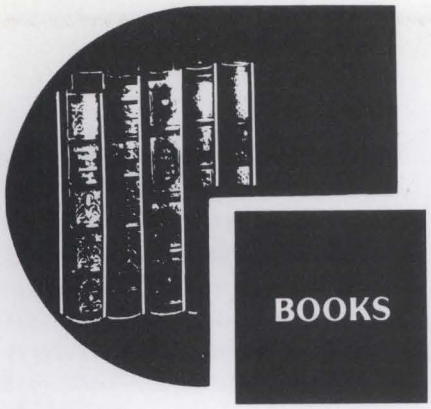
What I say here in confidence would of course be attacked by poets and critics of different commitments and tastes from mine.

But I am not going to fight Judith Wright's battle, or place her in Anglo-American categories. I will merely present her to students as worth attention, as a person able to fill some of the space inside the mind, which is what I require of the other poets chosen. Too many of the poets of the present moment cannot or will not do that.

And often too, in service to truth—the truth of a small personal moment—poets of the moment sacrifice one last matter, which one really hesitates to mention, since it is so long out of favor (though I notice it creeping back into critical discourse, as reviewers compliment such writers as James Merrill and yet another Wright, Charles Wright). I mean music.

Bring me that harp, that singer. Let him
sing.
Let something fill the space inside the
mind,
that's a dry stream-bed for the flood of
fear.
Song's only sound; but it's a lovely sound,
a fountain through the drought. Bring
David here,
said the old frightened king.

From Dogwood, yours faithfully,
C.V.



Review Essay

Weaving a Drama of Faith

Warren Rubel

The Orphean Passages

By Walter Wangerin, Jr. San Francisco: Harper & Row. 304 pp. $14.95.

Walter Wangerin, Jr., first received national recognition almost a decade ago with *The Book of the Dun Cow* (1978), which *The New York Times* selected as Best Children's Book of the Year and which also won the American Book Award for the Best Science Fiction Paperback in 1980. Wangerin has subsequently published *Ragman and Other Cries of Faith* (1984) and *The Book of Sorrows* (1985), a formidable sequel to *The Book of the Dun Cow*. *The Orphean Passages* and a recently released collection of poetry, *A Miniature Cathedral,* are further signs of Wangerin's maturing productivity.

In *Orphean Passages* Wangerin attempts to move beyond fable and religious story to a more complicated weaving together of at least three main narrative strands—the retelling of the Greek myth of Orpheus, the recent story of Pastor Orpheus and his representative "passion" in an inner-city church, and, more loosely, but integral to the drama of faith the author shapes, the narrator's glosses and commentary on the meaning and significance of his coinhering stories.

Ideally, it seems to me, one ought to read Wangerin's main works in sequence, for what makes *The Orphean Passages* unconventional as literature is Wangerin's bringing together story and literary oratory. If we continue with the weaver image, we see how the myth of Orpheus provides a necessary framework for Pastor Orpheus' passages. This relationship is not one of mere prototype or antitype to type, nor a matter of Wangerin's introducing a form of "figural" interpretation into his own work. Rather, each story corresponds and differs in its context and application and in precisely those ways that require the weaver to do his work and to comment on it.

The Orpheus myth provides a flexible but controlled schema for Pastor Orpheus' story. More accurately perhaps, the myth of Orpheus provokes both dialogue and dialectic between classical myth and Christian story, a contest for our participating and understanding the nooks and crannies of everyman and everywoman's faithful quest and journey.

Wangerin legitimizes his strategy with an opening quotation from the second century saint, Justin Martyr: "Whatever things were rightly said by any man, belong to us Christians. For those writers were able to see reality darkly, through the seed of the Word planted within them." This happy inclusiveness gives *The Orphean Passages* a special kind of historical resonance and reflective depth.

Wangerin offers his reader six distinguishable stages on faith's way: to experience the transporting love of God in ways similar to Orpheus' love and response to Eurydice; to feel great loss or the death of Christ as Orpheus lost Eurydice; to search with hope in the place of the lost and with the lost as Orpheus descended to search for Eurydice in the realm of the dead; to experience "faithing" as believing without seeing in the dark ascent as Orpheus, without looking back, sought to lead Eurydice out of the realm of the dead; to know the fear and terror of one's own nothingness and death in ways not completely different from Orpheus' having again lost Eurydice; to live by faith through the Resurrection in ways both like and joyfully different from Orpheus' final reuniting with Eurydice in the realm of the dead. Wangerin ends his work with an epigraph from I John 1, annealing the completed joy expressed there with himself as *scriptor,* or writer, and *lector,* or reader.

Wangerin tries to hold together the furious rush of life in order to grasp some of its meaning and significance.

A recitation of the schematic connections does injustice to the more complicated and compelling ritual of participation both expected and required of the reader. For Wangerin attempts to hold together the furious rush and motion of life in order to grasp with words some of its meaning and significance. Because words slip, slide, congeal and fall apart, ambiguously reveal and conceal, Wangerin places before his ordinary reader a rather extended prologue on his and our human predicament when we write or read or think about the ineluctable relationships between life or raw ex-

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perience and language.

"Look," writes Wangerin about the verb "faithing," a verb more acutely describing lived Christianity than the noun "faith," "even I am pretending fixedness in this very act of writing a book for you, supposing my words still to contain some meaning by the time you come to them to bleed them of that meaning. And I trust the pretense, that not all the blood's run out before you arrive." There is then a covenanted risk between writer and reader that beseeches participation, performance, appropriation on our part.

What then commends this work to our energy and juices of feeling and mind? First of all, if one has read any of Wangerin's earlier works, one continues to hear the same richly modulated and eloquent speaking voice. Wangerin, for example, is perhaps more effective as story teller when he writes under classical constraint. He keeps his lyrical gifts and his intensity controlled so that we feel an almost elegant ease in his rehearsal of the deeply moving story of Orpheus and Eurydice.

In addition there are, of course, repeated and sensitively altered motifs. In *The Orphean Passages* Wangerin renders more humanly explicit what he worked with indirectly through fable in Chauntecleer's quest with Pertelote and her community of hens and sundry barnyard folk—a quest for justice and peace and eventual forgiveness in *The Book of the Dun Cow* and *The Book of Sorrows.*

R. P. Blackmur has pointed out that in contemporary American poetic religious sensibility there continues a double concern: a long and arduous pursuit for light at the end of the journey and a crushing certainty that the darkness through which the poet journeys is overwhelmingly near. Pastor Orpheus' journey and Wangerin's commentary on these concerns offer the reader another telling of that spiritual quest in contemporary Christian terms. Because Orpheus and Pastor Orpheus and Wangerin sing their words to enchant animate and inanimate ears alike, one necessarily pauses before the more obvious pleasures that Wangerin brings to melodious language and sometimes to coarse and brutal words.

There is a covenanted risk between writer and reader that beseeches participation, activity, appropriation on our part.

Aside from the well-crafted telling of the Orphean passage, furthermore, Pastor Orpheus' story and the embedded stories of the inner-city people who love, sustain, stun, and redeem him, make this work worth patient reading. I liked particularly Mrs. Allouise Story's story because of her relentlessly stubborn and graceful synergism. When Pastor Orpheus urges on the widowed and failing Mrs. Story that "God is a merciful God, after all," she offers her rejoinder as she struggles up the steps in the clean and orderly home that leads to the room she shared with her husband, "Well, let's say that he's keeping the bannister from breaking, but it's me that's doing the pulling."

Because Wangerin writes of what he has suffered and learned, of his people and the cadences of lived speech, the words and images of those people—streetwise, victimized, compassionate, and outraged—sometimes beat like hammerblows on our heads, their words and predicaments striking at the religious and moral and imaginative inertia in our human hearts. The fictions, the pretense, here take on more reality than the living celebrities that move daily and quickly to extinction across the colored mist of the media screens in our living rooms and dens.

If the reader, moreover, happens to be a Christian within a historical and liturgical tradition, and if he or she has known some of the genuine delight, intimacy, and laughter of having been reared in a good home, where parents could be kind and gentle and good-humored; and if families in these homes were bonded relatively close in congregational life, intermingling the taste of bread and wine in the sacrament with people rejoicing and sorrowing at once—well then Wangerin writes about these kinds of experiences and memories with genuine feeling.

True, the story and its telling occasionally appear as naive as Pastor Orpheus' initial piety, but because our teller and commentator watches himself telling that story, we can always take the proper step backward because Wangerin's commentary is a kind of framing device, releasing us from too easy an identification with story and characters.

Our narrator, furthermore, preacher and orator that he may be, also knows the Singing School in the Western Tradition as well as some of the exhaustive normative and theological commentary on Scripture in that tradition. Because Wangerin steps forward to comment on the narrative in order to explicate the drama of faith, one might be put off by the occasional allusive density informing the text.

For example, unless one already knows George Herbert's poem "Easter Wings" and unless one is familiar with an archaic term from falconry like "imping," the grafting on of feathers to further flight, Wangerin's use of the allusion may strike the reader as deliberate obscurantism. At the same time the

allusion is appropriate to Mrs. Allouise's story and to the tradition. It quietly enriches the reader's grasp of the "perfect paradox" that Wangerin expands on in the fourth stage of faith's way, where the believer is called upon to believe when believing seems pointless. Only there where "she can truly imp her wings on Jesus'. God is doing a new thing, however hurtful it may seem. She is moving toward the fall which finally shall further her flight."

At other points Wangerin introduces Scriptural distinctions and insights that both attest to his own spiritual struggle and evolving wisdom and to the need for bringing these applications to readers less familiar with a tradition of a learned and eloquent ministry.

Because Wangerin tries to do many things in this unconventional work our response will probably depend on our expectations and our own willingness to expand our reading "conventions" to include the kind of literary oratory Wangerin delivers in *The Orphean Passages*. Apparently wishing to be both mother and midwife to his work, he does not cut the feeding tubes entirely from his work or separate his artistic intention from direct statements to and for his audience.

My own response remains ambivalent and provisional. I think I would more likely reread *The Book of the Dun Cow* or *The Book of Sorrows*. But *The Orphean Passages* necessarily brings theological closure to some of the unresolved problems raised in the earlier fables.

I think that Wangerin tries in *The Orphean Passages* to bring his readers to the transforming power and joy of the Christian faith in a culturally pertinent way. The efficacy of story rests in its oblique but immediate freeing effect. Story frees and perhaps flatters (as well as puzzles and confounds) the reader's capacity to respond to story, to metaphor and symbol.

This problem is not merely a matter of telling or showing. Rather it is a matter of the "purity" of telling in those written forms which come closer to persuasive speech or literary oratory. Story images and symbols generate their own "iconic augmentation," to use a bit of useful critical jargon from Paul Ricoeur. That is, there is a surplus of meaning available in written discourse, particularly in language prompted by those boundary situations which lead to human reflection and which Wangerin writes of so effectively.

Any schematization and the commentary it produces are bound, consequently, to constrain the reader to attend primarily to the meaning and significance the author as narrator intends. The procedure is at worst "preachy," at best an enriching and complicated form of exhortation. Fortunately any author as narrator and commentator may find resistances generated by his or her own story and commentary.

In *The Orphean Passages* there surface these interference nodes that carry us from commentary to story and back again to reflective thought because Wangerin raises his own questions at a number of points. He struggles, for example, with St. John of the Cross! Wangerin's "gentle, loving quarrel" is with St. John and any spirituality which abstracts itself from "the stuff and tumble of physical human existence. [St. John of the Cross'] sense of experience is spiritual purely, as though it took place in a monk's cell only, apart from the marketplace."

We gradually discern, of course, that what may be true of St. John of the Cross' spirituality may also be true of Pastor Orpheus. He needs to be "redeemed" by Christian friends who love him to the end in ways that he "knew" but did not understand until God in his love had worked his "faithing" through the passages to Pentecost.

That Wangerin takes up this quest and his commentary in a culture and marketplace where both his kind of art and his theological concerns run across the grain is a tribute to the man, to his editors and publishers, and possibly to the "fit and few" Wangerin continues to address in his expanding and important work.

four years gone

years fall.
our parting under pink blossoms, distant,
terra-cotta figures glassed in,
flesh outraged
at the strength of seasons.
we move on, flicker as history.
where does God keep us?
—our obscure length of finished days,
our fumbled words.

Margot Cullen

THE LAST WORD

Holidays

Dot Nuechterlein

As I write this, it is the Fourth of July, which explains the title. My memories of holidays are mostly great, but they blend together—it is the less ordinary ones that stick in the mind.

My best Independence Day was on foreign soil. (Funny how absence makes the heart grow patriotic.) After college I was on an overseas youth exchange, and on July 4th, in Germany, a friend and I considered celebrating. We thought we should at least sing the Star Spangled Banner, but we needed a flag to do it right.

I had some little kids' band-aids—blue, with white stars—brought for children I might meet; my friend had a red wallet. We cut some paper into strips, pasted them and a band-aid on the wallet, stuck a pencil through the contraption, and saluted our little Stars-&-Stripes as we sang. It was probably the first time I ever paid attention to the words.

My second most memorable Fourth was that Sunday in 1976, Bicentennial Day, when I lived in Canada. My family didn't own a color TV, so we rented one for July to watch the Bicentennial specials and the Montreal Olympics.

I went to church in a red, white, and blue dress, then didn't budge from the tube all day, watching the whole U.S. celebrate. I have seen spectacular fireworks, but the best ever were in Washington and New York and Boston and St. Louis and everywhere else the TV took us that night. Sometime in the midst of it all I decided that someday, back home, I would like to run for public office—and now I am.

There are dozens of good Christmas times in my head, most concerning family and friends. The crucial one, though, was at age twelve. I vividly recall observing my younger brother and sisters delighting in their presents and thinking to myself: "I believe I am no longer a child."

I definitely was not one the night I had too much New Year's Eve champagne, but I sure do remember that party! And I'm not talking.

Easter is my favorite religious holiday, but two well-remembered ones were far from sacred. Once I worked in an inner-city congregation, living in the run-down house next to the run-down church in that run-down neighborhood. Having stayed up very late the night before with friends and gotten up very early for sunrise services, by afternoon my husband and I needed a nap. It got dark while we slept; the place probably looked deserted.

I woke to see the bedroom window opening and a stranger's head entering. The man beside me thought I was dreaming when I poked him, until he noticed the intruder. We both yelled, the man fled, and we called the cops. An officer came and listened to our story, shaking his head.

"Look," he said, "we can't catch these guys if you scare them off like that. Next time let him get inside the house, okay? Then hit him over the head with a bat or something, and *then* call us. You can even kill him—just don't scare him away, or we can't help you."

The other Easter wasn't so dramatic; I hesitate to bring it up, but it does linger in the mind. Several years ago we were getting ready for my least favorite church service, a 5 a.m. Easter Vigil. Let me tell you, folks, you have not lived unless you have groped around at 4:15 in the wee hours, everyone in Easter finery, house guests and all, when the toilet decides to overflow. Frankly, I haven't been back to a Vigil since.

Then there was that one Feb. 14th. I was gone all day, so it was late before I delivered a rather mushy Valentine to my "roommate." The late sports news was just over, and reading the card he smiled contentedly. "Isn't life wonderful!" he exclaimed. "My wife loves me and Michigan beat Iowa." Ah well, at least he put me first.

There's another event I associate with July 4th, even though it happened in June. We went to an old Canadian fort for a concert which was to end with the 1812 Overture, complete with muskets and cannons and all—typical Fourth fare. The kids wouldn't sit through concert hall performances, but we hoped this would stuff some culture into them. They knew the Overture because Dad blasted it on the stereo whenever Mom was gone.

The early part of the program dragged, and everyone became increasingly aware of thunder. The orchestra upped tempo on the third last piece, the conductor announced they would skip the next one, and they swung into the 1812—just as the sky opened.

You should have been there: the performers played faster as the rain fell harder, but the storm was winning. Soon half the orchestra stopped playing to hold umbrellas over the valiant few still tooting and sawing. Muskets sizzled, cannons roared, bells pealed—but at the final note, no cheering sounded and no bows were taken as the conductor, musicians, soldiers, and audience ran for cover in the wildest exit imaginable.

Today that scene flashes before my eyes, and since there may never be another like it, I consider it to be an Honorable Mention holiday memory. It seems to fit right in with the others.